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# AHMO'S PLOT;

OR,

## THE GOVERNOR'S INDIAN CHILD.

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BY MRS. ANN S. STEPHENS,

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# AHMO'S PLOT;

OR,

## THE GOVERNOR'S INDIAN CHILD.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### THE CASTLE.

A STORM had been mustering in the sky all day long, heaving up from the forest in deep moans, and sweeping through the pines upon the banks of the St. Lawrence with sobs of pain, as if some spirit were pleading for shelter there. It came up slowly, as things of mighty strength usually unfold the evil within them, first ruffling the waters of the river into tiny waves, then whipping them into foam and hurling them one after the other in white and troubled tumult toward the ocean.

But the tempest was long in gathering, and not till after nightfall did any one guess how terrible it might be. Then, as the black darkness fell over forest and city, both man and beast began to prepare for the worst. The streets of Quebec were almost deserted, shutters were closed as the wind raged louder and fiercer down the river, and the inmates of many a dwelling looked at each other in terror of what might come. Taking the storm in all its fury, and towering into that dark night, was the castle of St. Louis. There, perched on a high precipice which overlooked the river, looming up grandly against a sky black as death, it was in itself even more massively gloomy than the town that seemed cowering in groups of darkened houses beneath it. But, somber as were the walls, and heavily as the storm-clouds gathered over them, a wing of the old castle shone out cheerfully through it all.

There the windows were so brilliantly illuminated, that a host of creeping vines, clinging to the stone-work, red with the first touches of an autumn frost, seemed literally on fire; and the dark boughs of some primeval trees, rooted in the clefts



of the precipice, were kindled to a golden green in all the depths of their leaves.

It was seldom that the old castle blazed forth so gloriously, and never was the contrast between a storm without and war-faces within so apparent. Wild as it was, the tempest that plowed the river and shook the barracks on Cape Dromand, which rose black and hard behind the castle, scarcely penetrated its walls. Within all was life and genial hospitality, for down in the basin of the river might be seen, now and then, the ghastly shadow of a large war-ship reeling in the wind and straining at its anchor, creaking and moaning in fierce discord with the deep wail that came up from the forest.

The officers of that French war-ship were in the castle, where the Governor and such members of his military household as he deemed worthy of the honor, received them with unusual cordiality, for the commander had been a classmate and old friend of Frontenac in his early youth, and in the isolation of his command, it was a rare thing for that proud man to meet with any one that reminded him how tender and loving his heart had once been.

It was in honor of his old friend that the castle blazed out so joyously in despite of the storm. The suite of rooms thrown open for his reception might have done credit to the Louvre or Versailles, so richly were they furnished and so courtlike did they appear.

Frontenac was not a man to omit any form of state etiquette because the person to be honored was his friend; indeed, he kept up all the ceremonies which became his high post with rigid exactness, as the representative of a king with whom these things were the first object of life. So in his state chamber and surrounded by the few nobles and distinguished men at the time in Quebec, he had given audience to the officers in the morning, and now, with less ceremony, received them in hospitable fashion, though with still more luxurious splendor. Though the winter had not yet closed in, fires flashed brightly from every fire-place in the long suite of rooms, while the slender glass pendants of the chandeliers turned scores of lights into rainbows as they fell—every thing was warm, bright and cheering—even the sweep of the storm



without came to those rooms so subdued that it gave a new sense of luxury to the guests assembled there.

The double doors of the apartment connecting with the one in which the Governor had received his guests swung slowly open, disclosing a sumptuously decorated supper table and luxurious appurtenances of the chamber.

With that grave, high-bred courtesy in which no noble of the polished court of Louis XIV was his equal, Frontenac ushered his guests into the adjoining apartment.

It was the most elegantly furnished room of the Governor's private suite, and its appearance almost made the new arrivals forget the weary leagues of sea that rolled between them and their sunny France.

The room was somewhat irregular in shape, the embrasures of the narrow windows so deep that they formed small recesses, before which swept curtains of heavy crimson cloth, shot and bordered with gold, that flashed brilliantly in the light of chandeliers and side sconces. The walls were paneled in beautiful designs of prints and flowers; in several of the larger spaces had been set pictures of famous masters, and over the mantel hung a full-length portrait of the king, taken in his prime of manly beauty.

The floor was inlaid with foreign woods set in a quaint arabesque pattern, and in the center was spread a square Turkey carpet, which gave an air of added warmth and richness to the room. The furniture was heavily carved and gilded, beautiful ornaments were scattered about, and the whole luxurious effect contrasted strangely with the bare corridors and harrock-like galleries which led to this charming suite of apartments. The table was covered with old plate and delicate wares, upon which glittered the crest of the Frontenacs, and the Canadian forests had furnished game and countless delicacies new to the pampered appetites of the strangers.

"Upon my word, Monsieur le Gouverneur," said the eldest of the guests, as they seated themselves at table, "you live here right royally! I think his Majesty would almost cross the sea himself for a sight of the banquet you offer us."

Frontenac smiled sadly as he answered:

"One may well seek a little atonement, Montmorenci, for a life of expatriation."



Then, as if fearing that his words might be construed into a complaint, which his pride would not have permitted him to make, he turned to his other guests and began conversing with more appearance of interest than he had before exhibited.

Montmorenci watched him closely, and was almost startled by the change in his face. Although these two men had not met for years, they had once been fast friends, and Montmorenci had anticipated his long voyage with satisfaction, since it would bring him again into communication with his old companion.

He had known Frontenac as a young man, full of fire and enthusiasm—reveling in a thousand ambitious dreams of a brilliant future—the handsomest and gayest of the young courtiers at Louis' court. He found him now, after this lapse of years, not yet arrived at middle age, but so changed that it hardly seemed possible that he could be the same man.

It was not that Frontenac had grown old—indeed, he looked several years younger than his real age, and the beauty for which he had been distinguished in his youthful days had ripened into manly vigor far more pleasing and impressive.

But few lines were visible on the pale, smooth face—the clear blue eyes looked out sadly, as if they found little to make them glow either with pride or resentment—his brown hair was rich and luxuriant as ever—every movement was full of ease and grace—but still that great and nameless change was not to be mistaken. To a casual observer, the expression of the face was one of stern, hard pride, which was indeed one of the ruling characteristics of Frontenac's nature, fostered and increased by the position of almost absolute power which he had so long held. But Montmorenci's quick eye went below the surface, and he could see that at the bottom lay some deep undercurrent of thought or feeling to which he had no clue. Even while taking an active part in the conversation, to conceal the restraint which seemed to be upon the younger guests, he was puzzling his memory to recall any incident in Frontenac's life which could have wrought such changes in the impetuous being he had known. Montmorenci could not help these thoughts crowding into his mind, even in that convivial scene. The efforts of his old friend to appear gay



and reckless were too apparent. The Governor, perhaps, saw this, and threw off all restraint.

"Come," he said, holding out a delicate Venetian goblet, glittering with a treasury of golden flowers, to be filled with wine, "our first behest must be to his sacred Majesty, the King."

A dozen goblets flashed into the light, and the whole party stood up to drain them. When the glasses sunk to the table again, Montmorenci saw that the goblet Frontenac had lifted was wreathed with a garland of delicate green leaves, lighted up with scarlet berries. It was nothing more than one of those lovely wild vines that trail their coral drops over the woodiness of a forest; but the effect was beautiful and suggestive. Nothing but the exquisite taste of a woman had originated the idea. That woman could have been no common servant, yet Frontenac was said to be a bachelor.

Montmorenci glanced from the half-drained goblet to the Governor's face, his eyes brightened, a meaning smile trembled on his lips.

Frontenac caught this glance, and followed it to the garland on his glass. An angry flush came to his face, then followed an expression of grave anxiety. The berries upon the tiny garland were overripe; one had dropped into his wine, and was floating there. Every day for years his cup had been thus delicately crowned, but never before had berry or flower been allowed to droop about the gold-starred glass.

The Governor half arose, then remembering his guests, sat down, and spoke to the servant behind his chair.

"Where is Chileli?" he said.

Montmorenci caught the name, but he could not tell to what language it belonged, and he heard the old domestic's reply:

"She has not been in this part of the house since morning."

Frontenac threw the wreath aside, as if the sight of it was painful, then gathered it back near his plate almost with the caressing movement with which he might have reconciled himself to some beloved object whom he had wronged by an impatient word.

"Do you ever think of returning to France, Governor?" asked one of the guests suddenly.



Frontenac brushed the wreath from the table down to his knee, as he answered :

“Not while his Majesty graciously sees fit to retain me here.”

There was something more haughty than usual in his voice, and he was conscious of it, for he added, more lightly :

“The forest has become my natural home. I have grown such a savage that I should be sadly out of place at court.”

There was a general disclaimer, and a score of compliments, such as Frenchmen of that time knew how to pay even to their own sex. Again Frontenac tried to throw off the weight which oppressed his spirits, and enter into their light and trivial conversation.

But in a few moments the old gravity came over his face. He was the courteous, polished host, but he could not be the boon companion of those careless spirits, true types of the French nobility, who, not a hundred years later, went to a bloody death with smiling pride and undiminished recklessness.

“For me,” exclaimed one of the younger guests, suddenly, “if I could not see Versailles and Paris once a year, at least, I should give up existence.”

“Out of pity to the gentle hearts you would break, you must consent to live, De Neuville,” said Montmorenci, laughingly.

“Then it would only be from a solemn sense of duty,” returned he, smoothing down his ruffles complacently.

“If the Governor could be induced to visit France only long enough to bring back a fair wife, he might find a new charm in his wilderness,” said another.

Montmorenci was watching his friend. He saw the lines deepen about his mouth, and knew that those careless words had struck some chord deep in that proud heart, which made it quiver with pain, but in an instant it was gone, and he answered, quietly :

“The fulfillment of my duties must be wife and family to me. I have little time for pleasanter things.”

“You are wise, Monsieur,” exclaimed De Neuville, with characteristic heedlessness. “It is agreeable to reign undisputed both out of doors and within.”



"Rather ungallant, Monsieur," returned Frontenac, "if report speaks truly concerning the adulation women bestow upon you."

The young fop smiled in a satisfied way, though he was quick enough not to expose himself to the mockery of his friends.

"You can hardly have very correct information here," he said, laughing.

"Oh, I am not quite a hermit," replied Frontenac. "I have still a friend or two left who recollect my existence and send me news of most that goes on at court."

"It was very fortunate for such fellows as De Neuville that you left France," observed Hauteville. "I was a mere boy, but I have not forgotten the fluttering there was among the ladies when you appeared at Versailles."

"The word is unfortunate," said Frontenac, with a smile; "it would imply that they were frightened and wished to run away."

Everybody laughed, and the Governor drew the subject artfully away from himself.

"Those times and his old self are not pleasant themes," thought Montmorenci. "Well, well, every man has his secrets, and Frontenac was silent as a well even in his young days."

The supper proceeded. The guests grew unrestrained and very gay as the rare wine fired their spirits, but Montmorenci did not relinquish his study of his old friend, and he saw plainly that his thoughts were not in the scene.

"Upon my word," said De Neuville, "I think I should be content to live in this new world if I could only find some beautiful Indian princess to bear me company. What are my chances, Governor?"

Frontenac's brows contracted; he looked at the speaker quickly, as if to discover if there was any hidden meaning in his words, but in an instant he was quiet again.

"Are the Indian women handsome?" Hauteville asked.

"Very seldom," replied Frontenac. "I have once or twice seen rare types of beauty among them."

He glanced down upon the flowers which lay on his knee, then in an irritated way brushed them upon the floor



"I think I should like a savage life," exclaimed De Neuville. "I once wore an Indian dress, that the Chevalier Georges brought over, to a fancy ball. It was greatly admired, I assure you."

"Now you will hear how he won the duchess' heart," said Hauteville.

"You will hear no such thing," returned De Neuville. "I don't make confidants of the whole world."

There was a general chorus:

"Oh, oh, De Neuville!"

He looked somewhat annoyed, and the Governor, with his rare tact, sought to change the subject.

At that instant a heavy peal of thunder shook the whole building. The storm had been nearing for some time, but in their revelry they had forgotten it.

The whole party ceased talking for an instant, silenced as people always are by the solemn sound.

"It must be a dreadful storm," said De Neuville.

"Too hard for any of you to think of going out to-night," said the Governor. "I trust you will honor me by remaining my guests until morning."

"Then we can have a comfortable night," said De Neuville. "Drinking wine on board a ship in a storm is precarious business."

"You shall watch the dawn up, if it please you," returned Frontenac. "After a little I must claim your indulgence, as I have not yet read the dispatches which Monsieur de Montmorenci brought me."

"And I don't intend to give myself a headache to please these four young lovers of mischief," said Montmorenci, "so I shall follow your example and retire."

"Coward!" they all exclaimed. "An old sea-dog like you afraid of a few bottles of wine."

"Oh, no," he said, good-naturedly. "I am only afraid that your conduct will remind me too plainly of my own youthful follies."

"The air of the new world infects him already," said one, "he is a savage."

"The Governor will lay his orders upon you," said Hauteville.



"Impossible," said Frontenac. "Unfortunately, my command does not include my guests."

"Ah, pass me the bottle," exclaimed De Neuville. "Montmorenci increases my thirst by his Spartan fortitude."

He filled his glass with red wine, and held it up to the light to watch the bubbles play over it like a wreath of flame.

"He has found his consoler," said Montmorenci. "I think we might take ourselves away unperceived."

Half an hour later the Governor rose, and Montmorenci accompanied him out of the room, followed down the corridor by the echoes of a gay song which the party struck up as soon as the restraint of their elders was removed.

"They quite forget they are strangers," said Montmorenci.

"They could not please me better," replied he.

The wind sighed drearily through the long passage, making the candles in the tall silver candlesticks, which the servant carried before them, flicker and almost go out, while at quick intervals the lightning flashed through the narrow casements, and lighted up the old hall with a supernatural brightness.

"A rough night," said Montmorenci.

"It is, but I have become quite accustomed to these violent storms. I trust your sleep will not be disturbed."

"Not in the least. I rather like to hear the wind roar."

"I have given you a room next my own," said the Governor, as they entered a comfortable chamber, where the fire was a pleasant exchange to the chill hall, which even the great fireplaces filled with blazing logs could not warm. "So, if your young friends choose to welcome daylight in with their merriment, you will not be disturbed."

"Many thanks; kindly and thoughtful as ever, Frontenac," he said, addressing him in the tone of their old friendship.

"You are pleased to think so," he replied, with grave courtesy, but Montmorenci was not offended, for he could but think that, under all that iron mail of pride, there were still chords in the man's heart which vibrated to the recollection of the time gone by.

Montmorenci had hoped for an hour's undisturbed conversation with his friend, but the Governor only stood for a few moments, conversing upon indifferent topics, while the servant occupied himself with little duties about the apartment.



"I will not keep you from your rest longer," said Frontenac.

"I assure you I have no desire to sleep, my dear friend."

"We shall have a busy day to-morrow, as I wish to show these young gentlemen all that is worth seeing in this wild region. I trust your first night under my roof may be a pleasant one."

He took his leave with many graceful speeches, but Montmorenci was hurt and vexed that they should part thus. His affection for Frontenac was no light feeling, and he longed to know something of his life during all the years that had intervened since their parting.

"Proud as a Frontenac!" he muttered, as he dismissed the servant, and seated himself before the fire. "There never was a truer proverb, and verily Charles does not belie his race."

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE ISLAND.

A FEW miles below Quebec lies one of the loveliest islands in the world; and within sight of its most beautiful point, the Falls of Montmorenci leap down the rocky barriers of the St. Lawrence more than two hundred feet, into a crescent-like basin of waters, breaking it up into a crystal tumult full of glorious beauty, and that wild music which the rush of a torrent alone can produce.

At the time of our story, the Falls were clothed heavily, wherever the solid rock would permit, with primeval trees—old, gnarled and sumptuous in their leafiness. Green mosses gleamed out, like rifts of emeralds, through the spray, as it shot into the air, forming rainbows in its downward rush; and at low tide, the descending torrent was torn into leaping foam by the rocks that had fallen, from time to time, into the depths of the basin.

The island was one noble forest, stretching for miles down the river, and cleaving its waters in twain, as if a wild



paradise like that must be guarded from the outer world with crystal roadsteads, in order to render its solitude complete.

But there was no spot so wild along the St. Lawrence that savage foot might not tread it. On a lovely slope of the island shore, within sight of the Falls, stood an Indian lodge, formed of logs and wild vines which clung around it from foundation to roof in a perfect network of leafiness. It was not exactly like a squatter's cabin, for the entrance had no door, and the windows were unglazed. But the light came in through the twinkling vine-leaves enriched to greenish gold, and, in warm weather, the great bear-skin was swept quite away from the entrance, which framed in the Falls, the overhanging trees, and a glimpse of the blue sky, like a picture.

This lodge was occupied by an Indian woman—no common squaw, but a creature of intellectual power and wonderful energy, who came every year, during the bright months, to the island, from a hungry craving of her woman's nature, and to work out some ambitious project that had been the great hope of her savage life.

This woman was sitting in the door of her lodge, with her eyes fixed on the distant waterfall, not dreamily, as one looks on a familiar object, but with a sharp, searching glance, as if she expected some one.

All at once her face brightened, and she leaned forward with a low exclamation in the Indian tongue, searching among the distant trees for some object that had glanced upon her an instant and disappeared again. Once more that light, womanly form came out from the green of the forest, and stood on a projecting rock half way down the fall. The gorgeous tints of her dress made her a conspicuous object in that wild place, as she bent eagerly forward, and shading her eyes with one hand, searched the island shore.

The Indian woman was crouching low on her door-sill, and could not be seen from the distance. The figure upon the rocks drew back, and, taking off a scarlet over-garment that she wore, flaunted it out as an impatient bird shakes its wings.

This brought the Indian woman to her feet. She hurried down to the shore, dragged a bark canoe from its mooring



in the tiny cove formed by the mouth of a brook that added its silvery music to the great roar of the waterfall, and shot out into the river.

When the canoe was fairly upon the water, the figure upon the rocks wrapped the scarlet mantle around her, and leaping from crag to bush, like a chamois, came down the sides of the great waterfall, clinging to the vines with one hand, and waving signals of greeting with the other. At last she veered a little from the Falls, seized the branch of a drooping birch-tree, and swinging herself down with fearless audacity, dropped on a shelf of rock close by the river.

The canoe came up like a bird upon the water, paused and lit. The paddles dragged, forming ripples of liquid diamond in the stream. Before the frail craft could touch the shore, the young creature on the rock gave a leap, with a wild, sweet laugh that made the woods ring again, and dropped lightly into the canoe. So adroitly had she poised herself, that the delicate shallop scarcely dipped beneath her weight. The Indian woman, with a grave nod of welcome, touched the water with her paddles, and away shot the canoe, rippling a path of sunshine along the waters as it sped toward the island.

The Indian girl sat down in the bottom of the canoe, and gathered the scarlet mantle around her.

"You did not expect Chileli? You were not watching for her, dear mother?"

The woman looked into the beautiful face bent upon her with a long and most loving gaze.

"Yes, I was waiting."

They both spoke in the Indian tongue, which sounded low and sweet, even in the sound of those rushing waters.

"Some men have come to the castle from over the sea--white braves that Frontenac loves. They have come to see him in the great council-chamber, and to-night he will feast them with wild game and grape-wine. When the white braves are with him he forgets Chileli; so she put on her moccasins and came away."

"What, did the child walk through the forest?"

"Oh Chileli has made a trail through the woods. She has not forgotten how to walk among the white braves."



"Then she loves the woods yet?" questioned the woman, a little jealously.

"Loves the woods! Was not Chileli born there?"

"But she is happier away from her people. She is content in the great lodge of the white brave."

"He is there," answered the young woman, as if the word contained all that was worth saying in the universe.

The elder woman made no answer, but pulled at her oars more vigorously, and struck the water as if she hated it.

"Where is the little one?" she asked, at last.

"Chileli left her in the lodge which Frontenac has given them, in the left wing of the castle. Mahaska is little, and her feet are too tender for the forest."

"She is an Indian, and must learn to love the forest," answered the woman, sharply. "Chileli has given herself to the whites; she folds her wings, and goes to sleep in their lodges; but her child, Mahaska, belongs to her tribe. She shall wed a great warrior, and rule the people her mother has left. Mineto has promised it."

"Mahaska is young, her wings are feeble. She can not fly from the nest yet. Let her rest there."

The Indian woman's eyes flashed, her paddles were thrust straight downward in the water, the savage lines in her face stood out fiercely.

"Mahaska is the grandchild of a chief so far above his fellows that kings from over the great waters sent men to talk at his council-fires. She belongs to her people. The prophets of the Six Nations have been warned of it by the Great Spirit while they held council in their great medicine lodges. When they take the war-path again, a woman born and cradled with the enemy, speaking many tongues in council, and grown wise with the white man's cunning, shall lead them to victory. When our prophets said this, the chiefs whispered around their council-fires: 'This is the child Mahaska. Let us wait while she becomes wise, and learns cunning of the whites. Then her hand shall grow strong to smite them.'"

Chileli's beautiful face had been bright beneath her coronet of green leaves and red berries when she sprung into the canoe, but it darkened now, and her great velvety eyes sad-  
**doed heavily.**



"Let us say no more," she pleaded, in the French tongue. "The child is little. The great white brave, her father, loves her with all his soul. What chief of the Nations is strong enough to take her from him?"

Chileli spoke proudly, her lips grew red, her eyes took fire under the fierce glance of the Indian woman. She looked up the stream, as if half resolved to leap in and swim ashore.

A crafty self-command stole over the elder woman. She silently fell back to her work, and watched the beautiful young creature with her half-closed eyes. The woman knew her power, and wisely kept within its limits.

"Here, take the oars," she said. "Ahmo loves her rest: your arms should be strong."

Chileli seized the oars, and dashing them into the water, laughed cheerily as the drops fell over them in a light shower. The sound was unpleasant to Ahmo. Laughter like that, rich and sweet from the heart, was an unnatural sound to her savage ear. It was something her child had learned out of her happiness with the whites. Chileli did not heed this—she was too gayly occupied with her pleasant work. A few vigorous pulls brought them to the mouth of the island brook, and the canoe shot up it as an arrow flies; then, with a graceful recoil, it lay still. The young Indian sprung upon the bank, radiant from exercise. She flung the oars down, and laughed again as they sunk into the thick grass. She seemed resolved to sweep all remembrance of her mother's conversation away with merriment.

"Ahmo has been expecting her child," cried the woman, leading the way to her lodge, and pointing to a pile of furs, on which the beautiful visitor seated herself. "This morning she went into the forest, for there is yet sight enough in her eyes to fly an arrow with the best woman of the six great tribes."

As she spoke, Ahmo took a group of birds from beneath a cluster of pine-branches that hung against the rude logs of her dwelling, and held them up with a gleam of savage pride. Ahmo never shot an arrow that did not kill.

"See, each one is smitten in the heart," she said, laying the birds at Chileli's feet, while she searched under the cool leaves again, and brought forth a string of delicate brook



trout, still glistening with drops of cool spring-water; "let Chileli rest and listen to the song of the great waters while her mother cooks the birds as the white brave loves them when he comes to her lodge."

Chileli smiled and sunk down upon the furs, for to own the truth, a walk of eight miles through the forest had wearied her a little. To an Indian woman of the wilderness it had been nothing; but this young creature had been enervated by the luxurious life which civilization had brought to the new world, and the natural vigor of her constitution had been somewhat impaired. So, with a little conscious show of weariness, she lay down, and closing her eyes, began to dream of the tall, proud man whom she had left among his countrymen at the castle—dream as she ever did, when left alone, for her pure, wild soul, in all its depths and secret chambers, had no image save that one, and she could not breathe without thinking of her white husband, for such Frontenac was, if not by the laws of his country, certainly by all the forms that solemnize an Indian marriage. So she closed her eyes and went on dreaming, till sleep came over her, and her lips parted like red berries ripe for the gathering—parted with such happy smiles as satisfied love alone can give to a woman's mouth.

By-and-by the mother of this half-civilized young creature came in with the savory birds and trout grouped upon curves of fragrant birch-bark just cut from the trees, and Chileli, arousing herself, partook of this sylvan repast with a keen relish that made the old woman's eyes brighten.

After this delicious meal was over, Ahmo sat down upon the floor at her daughter's feet, and began to talk of her people and the great chiefs of the Six Nations, striving to inspire the noble creature with something of her own fierce enthusiasm. But Chileli's heart was too full of its great love for any other feeling to find room there; she only retained enough of her old nature to make her enjoy the free, out-door actions and graceful forest-games which could be adopted into her new existence. So she smiled at her mother's enthusiasm, and answered it with praises of her white lover, or proud exultations over the beauty of her child.

When the Indian woman saw that her eloquence only **awoke** fresh flashes of affection in that young heart, she ceased



to speak of her people, and adroitly won Chileli into the open air. With the forest all around her, and the smell of the pine-trees sweeping on each breeze, some of her old wild-wood nature came back. She followed her mother gleefully, from dingle to glade. She shot the pretty birds as they flitted from bough to bough in the thick green of the trees, and laughed with thrills of savage ferocity when they came quivering down to die. Some of the forest-leaves were turning gorgeous after the first frost, and late wild-fruits still glowed on tree and thicket. Chileli shouted when she stood beneath the tent-like vines, and saw them purple with grapes; she forgot herself, and climbed the trees with graceful writhings of her body, like a leopardess at play, gathering the fruit in her scarlet cloak, and flinging it down in glowing masses on the turf. She shook the red wild-plums from their boughs, and cracked the ripe hazel-nuts between her beautiful white teeth, laughing richly at the sound of their breaking. Thus the morning was spent and afternoon came on. By degrees the woods grew dark, and the whisper of the winds swelled hoarsely among the forest-boughs. Chileli was startled; she looked up and saw that the sun had withdrawn itself and that all the soft blue had left the sky—a dull, leaden gloom pervaded every thing. Afar off she heard the waterfall, roaring like a pack of wild animals in pain—nearer arose the lash and moan of waters gathering in unnatural tumult; overhead the boughs began to toss and creak, tearing themselves free from a thousand clinging vines that writhed mournfully as they were flung to the earth.

Chileli was frightened—a storm in the woods was almost new to her. She stood motionless and watched it; the savage instincts of her nature held her in thrall. Her great black eyes took fire, her attitude and look were defiant.

“Is Chileli afraid?” said Ahmo, regarding the young woman with pride.

“Afraid? no! Is not Chileli the daughter of a great chief?”

“And the child, Mahaska, does she love the storm?”

Chileli started, the vivid light went out from her face. Mahaska, her child, might be looking out upon the storm, terrified. The young mother looked around; she had gathered



these heaps of purple grapes and ruddy plums for her little girl. Not even the storm should drive her from this loving purpose. She gathered some great autumn-tinted leaves, wove them in a basket, and filled it with clusters of those tiny grapes that only ripen when the bloom of a first frost is on them—with wild-plums and brown nuts dropping from their half-open husks. Over this she wove a wicker-work of hemlock twigs, and knotted two branches thick with feathery leaves together, for a handle—all this was the work of a few minutes. The old woman stood by, uneasily, as she worked. The mustering storm filled her with dread. The forest was closing in with premature darkness.

“Now,” said Chileli, starting up with the rustic basket in her hand, “now I am ready to go home. The white brave will ask for Chileli, and it is a long way along the trail.”

Ahmo was anxious; she looked at the leaden sky and listened to the wild moan of the winds.

“The storm is mad. Like a wild tiger it is beginning to tear up the hemlocks. Chileli must not take the trail, or the broken boughs will crush her. She shall have soft furs, and sleep in her mother’s lodge.”

Chileli turned pale, her lips grew white, and began to quiver. “No, no, the white brave would be very angry; he does not know where Chileli is gone; he will think the storm-spirit has struck her dead with his fiery arrows. Chileli will go home.”

“But the way is black with death.”

“Then Chileli will take the water-path and meet the wind in her face. She is not afraid.”

The old woman stamped her feet in furious impatience. She knew the peril that her daughter would not understand.

“There is death on the water-path; see how the fire-spirits fling hot arrows over it from the hills,” she cried, pointing to the flashes of lightning that shot through and through the forest-leaves.

Chileli looked up, smiling.

“The great Mineto will hold them back, for he knows how Chileli loves the white brave. He will look into her heart, and turn aside the fire-arrows.”

“But Ahmo will not let her child go. It is death.”



Chileli was walking rapidly toward the lodge, heedless of her mother's protest. Darkness in its first gray duskiness was gathering around the island. She saw it, and turning from the path, went down to the forest-stream where the canoe was rocking lightly in the wind. She sprung in, set down her basket of fruit, and seized the paddles. She was pushing the light craft out into the river, bidding her mother farewell in the Indian tongue.

Ahmo did not answer, but with a wild look from the sky down upon the heaving tumult of the river, sprung into the canoe, snatched the oars and pushed it into the stream, setting up a thrilling death-song as she faced the storm.

Chileli knew the meaning of that song, and began to shudder. What if it were really death that lay in her path? She was only brave in her great love, and cowered down in the canoe, watching her mother's eyes, and praying inly to the saints her white brave worshiped.

But the old woman was full of courage; her eyes brightened, her forehead expanded. She pulled against the current and baffled it with the ferocious strength of a tigress. The storm was her enemy, she would conquer it or die, with the death-chant on her lips.

How the wind howled—how the great forest-trees moaned and wrestled and were torn up root and branch in the stupendous struggle, thundering the news of their own awful overthrow down upon the river. How fearfully the winds lashed those seething waters, and scattered the cold foam over those two daring women. The darkness had come on black and heavy; the mother and child could only see each other's faces by the lightning that flashed by and played with the foam like fiery serpents chasing each other into the gloomy depths of the waters.

Had that canoe been a great ship, with ribs of live oak and bolts of iron, the storm would have torn it to pieces; but it was too frail and insignificant for a mighty destruction, and danced over the tumult like a flower cast upon the tempest; fortunately the storm came up-stream, hurling the little craft forward in spite of the current, but its course was uncertain. It fled like a living thing first toward one bank, then in an opposite direction. It got entangled in strange currents and



was whirled about for long minutes in whirlpools born of the tempest.

At last they came under the great precipice upon which the castle of St. Louis stood. Lights shone bright and warm through the windows of the banqueting saloon, streaming out upon the tormented river. Chileli clasped her hands and broke into an outburst of thankfulness. Frontenac was yet up with his guests. He would not know that she had been out in all that terrible storm. Only let her reach the castle, and he never should know. The canoe crept along under the precipice, where it was comparatively sheltered. The skeleton shadows of a great ship fell across them as they drew toward the lower town and struggled to the shore.

Chileli sprang up, gathered the wet cloak about her shivering form, and taking the basket of fruit, leaped ashore.

"Come, mother, tie the canoe, and go with me to the castle," she cried, through her chattering teeth; "come, mother, come."

Ahmo pushed her little craft back into the stream, answering sharply: "Ahmo only sleeps in her own lodge; the roof of no white brave shall ever shelter her."

As her words reached the trembling creature who stood listening for them, her voice was drowned, and the canoe was out of sight. Chileli was troubled, and called aloud for her mother to come back; but the wind alone howled an answer, and, chilled through and through, wet and troubled, she bent her way to the steep street, half thoroughfare, half stairs, which winds up to Cape Dromand. She found her way to the castle without molestation, for the very guards were forced to take shelter, and she knew of a private entrance, which admitted her to the room, half chamber, half lodge, in which her daughter lay sleeping. Then she set down the basket, and bent over the sleeping girl for a moment, but dared not touch the warm cheek with her chilled lips, or let a water-drop rain over it from her dripping garments. She was about to ding off the wet cloak, but desisted, from a keen anxiety to know if the Governor had been to his room and missec her



## CHAPTER III.

## A NIGHT OF TERROR.

WHEN Frontenac entered his room, he did not even glance toward the papers which had been spread on the table by his bed. He threw himself on a couch before the fire, and gave way to the gloom which had been upon his spirits during the whole evening.

Once when his servant ventured to knock at the door, fearful that he had been summoned unheard, Frontenac motioned him out, and the man knew his moods too well to intrude again. It was not only that the memories of his native land, which the conversation of the evening called up, gave him pain—not only that the sight of his old companion brought back his youth like a ghost that would not be quieted—a restlessness and oppression lay upon his breast to which he could give no name. He felt almost as if he were waiting for a summons from some unseen being, and sat in a vague sort of expectancy which could not be controlled. Then he rose, smiling at his own folly, and his thoughts went wandering back to the old life whose memory he had striven so long and so unsuccessfully to banish. At last, tired of wounding his own heart with those recollections of poignant suffering, he threw himself half dressed upon his bed, drew the heavy counterpane about him and strove to slumber. He had extinguished the lamps—the glare of the wood-fire cast a flickering light through the apartment, brightening the rich colors of the heavy hangings and seeming to increase the gloom of each shadowy recess.

It was long before a feeling of drowsiness followed his recumbent position. Once, when almost asleep, he started up, seized by the same deathly chill that had frozen him when entering the chamber. At length the lights and shadows danced more faintly before his eyes—the heavy lids gradually closed, and he sunk into a slumber so still and profound that it looked more like insensibility than a natural sleep.

No sound could reach the apartment from without, save at



intervals the heavy tread of the sentinel in the corridor and the distant rumble of the thunder, which began to sound broken and indistinct, as if the storm had abated its fury. While he slept, the hangings in a corner of the room were thrown back, and a woman appeared in the opening—the lamp which she carried in her hand revealing a secret door and narrow, winding staircase beyond, as she stood holding the draperies back in her disengaged hand.

She lifted the lamp so that its rays fell upon the sleeper—she saw that he did not move, and extinguished it, murmuring some words in a strange dialect; then she carefully closed the door and let the curtains nestle down over it with a sound like the swooping wings of some great bird. As she crept noiselessly across the room, the firelight revealed her plainly, showing her garments drenched with rain, and her long black hair broken loose from its coronet of scarlet berries, and streaming wildly over her shoulder.

It was Chileli who stole into his chamber, softly listened, heard his breathing, and knew that he was asleep. She held her breath, she forced the teeth that chattered against each other to be still, drew nearer to the fire, and began wringing the moisture from her hair. She stood with her profile against the red light of the flame, and then you saw how rare a creature was a beautiful Indian woman. The rich, dusky complexion was singularly smooth and clear, her features were modeled with the delicacy of a Greek statue, and the large eyes, spite of a certain anxiety in the present expression, were soft and tender.

It was a strange face for an Indian from its power of expression. You felt, in looking at her, that she had in a great degree escaped from the ignorance which enslaved the women of her race—not that she had acquired knowledge from books—probably no wild fawn was more innocent of such lore than she; but some great influence which had descended upon her life had wrought the change and thrust her forever beyond the possibility of companionship with those of her own blood. She stood thus, afraid to go near the bed in her wet garments—she stood with her small feet buried in the long fur of a bear-skin which served as a rug, enjoying the warmth with a little sigh of relief. As her clothes began to



dry, she commenced braiding her long hair and wreathing it about her head in folds smooth and perfect as if aided by a mirror.

The warmth and light were evidently pleasant to her, for she gave a little sigh of content as she extended her limbs upon the bear-skin. Then on the instant she arose, her eyes turned again toward the bed, as they did with every movement she made, the poor creature was so fearful of disturbing his slumber, though a panther could not have moved with more noiseless grace and quickness.

At length she ventured to approach the bed. Frontenac was sleeping, heavily, but his brow was knit and his face frowned darkly as if some unhappy feeling had followed him into sleep. She bent more closely over him, with her hands half extended in an attitude full of pleading and question—her face revealed every thought so plainly that you might know she was jealous even of his dreams, because she could not penetrate their mystery.

She was trembling still at intervals, for the chill had struck deep into her frame, and besides that there had been a wild anxiety which stung her heart more than terror of the awful storm to which she had been exposed.

“Did he miss Chileli?” she murmured. “No, no, the white braves were with him; they always come between his heart and the poor Indian—she was not missed!”

She bowed her head mournfully, and her hands fell at her side with a patient resignation sad to witness—that very gesture and the melancholy expression which crept about her mouth showing plainly that whatever affection and happiness she might find in her present life, the poor wild-bird had not learned to accept her destiny without trouble and bitter heart-aches.

“The flowers were not fresh on his cup,” she said, struck by a sudden thought. “He will know that Chileli was gone; he will question and frown when he hears the truth, but he must know when he asks—Chileli can not lie.”

As she spoke, Chileli gazed down upon the sleeper with such intensity of affection, that had there been any responsive chord to stir in his heart, he must have awakened under the influence of those glorious eyes. But he did not stir—the



white hands were knotted closely together over the crimson counterpane—the brows were contracted with an expression of increasing pain.

“He has trouble, perhaps, and will not let Chileli know,” she whispered to herself, and turned away with the patience and endurance which habit and hard teachings make a portion of an Indian woman’s nature.

A sofa stood before the fire, shutting out a view of the warm ray from any person not close by the hearth. She crept around it with noiseless grace and quickness, as a panther might steal to his lair, and coiled up her stiffened limbs on the genial fur, drawing a shuddering breath as the warmth crept around her.

Chileli could not sleep; the chill had penetrated to her vitals; she trembled in every pulse of her body, despite the warmth of the fire. A drowsy stupor stole over her at last, but all at once she was aroused from it by a sharp cry and a struggling sound from the bed. She had half started from the rug when a door was flung open, and Montmorenci entered from the next room. His strange presence terrified her, and she groveled to the floor, holding her breath.

Frontenac had started partially up from the pillow; one hand was clutched fiercely on the counterpane, his other hand was dashing to and fro as if to tear some oppressive weight from his chest. His breathing was painfully difficult; great drops of agony glistened on his forehead.

Montmorenci sprung toward the bed.

“Frontenac! Frontenac! in heaven’s name, what is the matter?”

The Governor wrenched away the clothes from his chest, and in the desperate struggle awoke. He looked wildly on his friend, and starting up in bed, leaned forward, searching the room with shuddering eagerness.

“What did you expect—what are you searching for?” asked Montmorenci, in a soothing voice. “My dear fellow, you’ve had a shock at the nightmare with a vengeance.”

Frontenac lifted his wild eyes but made no answer. His frame shook till the bed trembled under him.

“This is something more than a fit of indigestion,” said Montmorenci. “Why, Governor, you’ve had a terrible shock.”



"Yes," muttered Frontenac, "it was terrible. Was any one in the room?"

"Not a living soul. I have not slept, and should have heard the least noise."

"Such things do not make a noise," whispered Frontenac; and he sunk back upon his pillow, so completely prostrated that for a few moments he could not even speak, his breath coming in gasps, and his eyes wild with the terror which had roused him so suddenly from slumber.

Montmorenci, with the quickness of a man accustomed to act in emergencies, poured some water into a glass and held it to his friend's lips before he spoke another word, lifting his head upon his arm with a gentleness and solicitude almost womanly.

"Are you better?" he asked, as the Governor lay back upon the pillow, while his breathing became less rapid and irregular.

"Better now," he said, "it will pass in a moment."

He closed his eyes and turned his face away, but Montmorenci could see the tremor which agitated his whole frame still. After an instant he started up again, looking wildly about the apartment as if expecting to see some strange object visible in the partial gloom.

"You had a very terrible attack of nightmare," said Montmorenci; "are you subject to it?"

Frontenac shook his head and supported himself on his arm, saying, hoarsely:

"It was no nightmare, Montmorenci. I am not given to such things. This is a death-warning."

Montmorenci looked at him in surprise, and could only ascribe his words to the effects of the dream, for of old he knew Frontenac as a man not in the slightest degree given to superstitious fancies.

"Don't talk of it, just yet," he said, soothingly; "I will sit here until you are fairly awake."

"I am awake now," answered Frontenac, in the same unnatural voice. "I tell you I have had a warning of some death that is going on now."

"Of what?" asked Montmorenci. "What were you dreaming of?"



"I don't remember—nothing of any consequence—I was dragged out of sleep by this shock."

Montmorenci wisely forbore irritating him by insisting upon his own idea of the matter, that the feeling was merely the result of an indistinct but frightful dream.

"I tell you it was no dream," he went on, trying to speak more calmly. "Something has happened which will affect my whole future life. My soul has been shaken within me."

"What is it—can you tell what it was like?"

"The Count de Frontenac is dead," he replied, in a hollow whisper. "What else can it be? I have no love or hate for any other to shake me thus."

"Your brother—do you speak of him?"

Frontenac made an affirmatory sign with his hand. "He tried in his death-struggle to communicate with me," Frontenac continued; "he repented at the last moment—he wished me to know it—that was the shock which roused me."

Montmorenci could not even affect incredulity while the speaker's eyes were fastened upon his face—whatever his feelings might be when he came to think over the matter calmly in solitude, he was for the time wholly under the spell of his friend's influence, and listened with a credence which he would not have believed possible an hour before.

"Struggling to make me understand," repeated Frontenac; "he died so, with that last appeal unspoken on his lips."

"Had he done you a great wrong?" asked Montmorenci, feeling that the only way to calm his companion was to lead him on to converse.

"He wrecked my life," replied Frontenac; "he made me what I have been all these years—an exile—a homeless, deserted man."

"I know nothing since we parted when I went on my first voyage to India," said Montmorenci; "when I returned, three years after, you had left France."

Frontenac was silent again for many moments, but there was a power upon him stronger than all the pride of his iron will, which forced him for the first time in his existence to open his lips concerning his past life.

"I must speak," he said, "I must speak! I feel as if I should go mad to keep these memories hoarded in my breast



any longer! Be patient, Montmorenci—I am not ~~often~~ weak.”

“You were the friend of my childhood and my youth,” returned Montmorenci; “I have loved you more than man living—I looked forward to this meeting with ardent desire—I have been hurt, chilled by your coldness—tell me your story that I may know its cause.”

“Good friend! tried friend!” exclaimed Frontenac, clapping Montmorenci’s hand with a fervor very unusual with him. “Yes, you can be trusted—you are not like other men, a wild animal trying to get at your neighbor’s heart that you may tear it out.”

“I am the same Montmorenci you knew of old,” he answered; “trust me as I trusted you in your youth.”

“I must speak,” he repeated, for even in that moment of weakness his pride, fostered so carefully during all those years that it might make an armor for his heart, struggled against the power which was upon him, and forced the recollections of the past up to his lips with such strange pertinacity.

“Sit down here, Montmorenci,” he said.

Montmorenci obeyed in silence, his sensitive nature teaching him not to irritate his friend, even by opposing his slightest request. When he returned to his seat, Frontenac was lying back among the pillows, his eyes looking straight before him with the misty expression of one who recalls the past.

Behind the couch lay the Indian woman, afraid to stir lest she should be discovered; holding her very breath in a jealous desire to gather up every word that fell from those beloved lips; dizzy and faint with the inexplicable emotions which swept over her when she comprehended that she was to hear the story of his life—his life in which hers was bound up.



## CHAPTER IV

## FRONTENAC'S LIFE STORY.

THE Governor began abruptly, speaking more as if thinking aloud than addressing his companion, while Montmorenci leaned back in his seat, touched to the very core of his honest, sympathetic heart as the narrative went on and the whole motives of his friend's life were thus laid bare before him.

"You remember my brother; you can understand that, with the peculiar organization I inherited from our mother, how little sympathy or proper understanding there could be between us.

"My brother was five years older than I. Between his birth and mine, another child had been born—a little girl, that only lived a year. They said my father had been very fond of this infant, and that its loss caused his indifference to my appearance two years later. He was content with the son he had—he would have preferred that my mother's fortune should be inherited by a daughter.

"I can only remember being completely engrossed by my elder brother when I saw him, which was seldom during my childish years, for he was usually at court; and while her children were young, my mother preferred the seclusion of our old *château* to the gayeties which so many women of her age would have sought with such avidity.

"I am not going to weary you with these childish reminiscences although they are strangely vivid in my mind to-night.

"I was sixteen when my life really began—the strong, passionate life of my youth, which bloomed so brightly for a season, only to be blighted by gusts so black that no sunlight could warm it into a second blossoming.

"The old *château* of the De Courvelles had been for years vacant—since my recollection only the old domestics left in charge had occupied it. The marquis had been, for many years, ambassador at one of the Italian courts—his feeble health requiring the mild air of the South.



“At this time he died, and we heard that the widow and her daughter were to return home almost immediately. My mother was charmed, for the marchioness had been her first and dearest friend, and I was pleased to see her so happy in the prospect of their speedy reunion.

“I need not tell you that between my mother's heart and mine there was never a cloud; you know how I loved her—it is difficult for me to speak calmly of her even now, after all this lapse of years which has left me so cold and well armed to bear any trouble that existence can bring.

“I was out on horseback one day; you know how I almost lived in the open air from my fondness for that noble exercise. It was a very simple, commonplace incident which wrought the change I caught at with all a boy's impetuosity. As I gained the summit of a hill near the De Courville castle, I saw a young girl on horseback going down the descent. Her servant had been obliged to make a pause, owing to some trouble with his saddle, and she had dashed on with the heedlessness so common to a girl of her years.

“The Spanish jennet was imperfectly broken. I saw her shy suddenly and then plunge forward with a violence which threatened every instant to fling the unfortunate girl from her saddle, although she still kept her seat and attempted to rein her steed with the skill and courage of an experienced rider. But her slight strength was powerless to guide the frightened brute that sped on with increasing speed.

“I was conscious of no distinct thought—only the vague horror caused by seeing a human being in imminent peril for the first time in my life. I only knew that I dashed on—that by one of those sudden movements which a Spanish groom had taught me, I managed to catch the bridle of her horse as I passed, and in an instant more I had dismounted from my horse, who stood like a block of marble at my command, and lifted the girl from her saddle.

“She could not stand, but through it all she manifested the wonderful self-control which was an element so strong in her nature—she neither shrieked nor trembled. I only knew by the death like weakness which made her limbs refuse to support her, how much she had suffered during those terrible moments



"I placed her upon a pile of rocks by the roadside, and by the time she had begun to recover, the old servant had reached us, much more alarmed than his mistress.

" 'God bless you, sir, God bless you!' he cried, and in the same breath he managed to tell the young lady who I was, while he threw himself from his horse, and began kissing her dress in a way that would have been absolutely laughable had not genuine feeling rendered it pathetic.

"She had not yet spoken a word. As for me, when the first shock was passed, I could only stand and stare at her in a sort of stupid wonder, with a whirl at my heart such as I had never felt before.

" 'Can you ride, Mademoiselle?' demanded Pierre. 'Shall I gallop on for assistance?'

"She shook her head.

" 'No, no; my mother would be so frightened. Wait one instant longer. I shall be quite recovered then.'

" 'Monsieur de Frontenac will help us,' continued the old man, quite out of his senses between fright and anxiety. 'He is very brave—I have always said—the bravest of all the Frontenacs. Oh, God bless you, sir, you have saved my mistress.'

"The girl's eyes were full of tears at the simple pathos of his disconnected speech, but I recollect feeling a vague impatience because he would not hold his tongue.

" 'You know it is Mademoiselle de Courvelles,' Pierre babbled away, entirely forgetful of his usual respectful manners. 'How on earth we shall get home I can't tell. Madame will never trust me again. I am miserable. Oh, that accursed saddle!'

"I put up my hand impatiently, and he had sense enough to be silent at last.

" 'Mademoiselle,' I said, as firmly as my voice would permit, 'if you will allow me to lead your horse, Pierre can take care of mine and his; thus we shall reach the *château* without difficulty.'

"I could see the color come back to her cheeks, under the influence of my own embarrassment, but she answered, courteously:

" 'I am sorry to make you so much trouble, Monsieur. I have not yet thanked you, but indeed I—'



"She broke off abruptly, and I could see that her nerves were so shaken it was with great difficulty she prevented herself from bursting into tears.

"I assisted her into her saddle, and taking the bridle in my hand, led the horse down the hill, followed by Pierre with his horse and mine, he all the while mingling maledictions upon his ill-luck and thanks for his mistress' preservation in a strange jumble, which would have been inexpressibly ludicrous to any one in a state to have listened to his absurd exclamations.

"When we reached the *château*, it so happened that my mother was there, making her first visit upon her old friend. You may imagine how both women behaved. They wept, they embraced us, they laughed, and they wept again. Whatever I might be to the rest of the world, I was a hero to those three from that moment.

"The marchioness was a charming person, but in ill-health, and naturally of a feeble character. Her husband's death had been a great shock to her, and now all her love was centered upon her child with the strength of idolatry. In all business affairs she was completely under the dominion of her husband's uncle, the old Duke de Nevers, a proud, tyrannical old man, whose greatest happiness in life had been in making other people miserable.

"I tell you all these things now, that you may understand my story clearly as it proceeds, for much of my unhappiness was owing to the weakness of that unfortunate woman.

"All this happened in the spring time. I can not describe to you the summer which ensued. My father and elder brother were both absent. Adèle remained with her mother for the marchioness' health was so delicate that even the girl's stern old guardian, the duke, hesitated to cause her the suffering which would have followed placing her daughter in a convent to finish her education, according to custom.

"I can not describe Adèle de Courvelles to you. Afterward, you saw her at court, but there was a shadow on her loveliness then which, though it gave an added charm to her appearance, destroyed forever the buoyant beauty of the time of which I speak.

"She was three years younger than I—a child, you will



lay—but the fervent skies of Italy had early developed form and mind, and the dignity which characterized her, even in her gayest moments, made her appear older than she really was. Her father had been, by disposition, a studious man, and during his long illness books had been almost his only pastime. Adèle had been his constant companion, so that, from studying and association with him, she was much better read and informed than most men outside of a cloister.

“She had never known the restraints of a convent, for her father would not allow her to be separated from him; so her childhood and first youth had been spent in the delightful freedom of an Italian life.

“When I began to love her I can not tell. I believe that the mysterious thrill which passed through my whole being when I first met her was answered in her gentle heart, and bound our souls together too closely for human power ever to separate them.

“There was no interchange of vows—no word that might not have been spoken before the whole world, but each knew the other’s heart; we had no need of language to make our feelings understood. My mother and the marchioness looked on with quiet pleasure—happy in our happiness, and weaving a thousand dreams for our future, as women who have little left in existence save the hopes and prospects of their children are apt to do.

“The two friends were constantly together. They rode and walked, they made daily visits upon each other, and Adèle and I were their constant companions.

“Perhaps all this is tiresome, but it is so sweet to me to dwell upon that one rosy spot in my life, that I could not spare you these details.

“We read and studied together. I was by her side when she rode out. We wandered about the beautiful parks of the *château*, while our mothers sat under the shadow of the great trees, and recalled youthful recollections, or wove dreams for our future. Very seldom does it happen that two young persons in France of our position enjoy such freedom; but there was no one to reprove the marchioness, and my own mother was tolerably free from the ridiculous scruples which actuate most persons of her rank.



“The summer passed—the one bright summer of my life. The marchioness decided to spend the winter at a villa she owned near Marseilles, fearing our harsh climate of Brittany. At her urgent request, my mother promised to accompany her. My father was detained at Versailles, my brother was still on his travels, so that the plan was deemed on all sides a good one. Of course I accompanied my mother and her friends.

“The winter was but a continuation of the summer we had spent. Each day the love in our hearts grew stronger, and defied more hotly any control that could have been put upon it.

“With the spring came the breaking up of all our quiet bliss, although we never dreamed that any shadows could arise to mar our happiness beyond the sorrow of separation.

“I was eighteen. My brother already held a position of importance about one of the royal dukes, and when my father came home from Versailles it was decided that I should enter the army. You know how delighted I was with my profession. You knew me when I went on to court to secure my appointment.

“My brother had just been betrothed to a daughter of the Count de Noailles, so that his destiny was considered settled. I had seen very little of him during the past two years. As children, we never were friends; he was overbearing and tyrannical, and—I blush to say it of a Frontenac—false and treacherous.

“I do not think his affection for my parents was at all strong, but he could not endure to see *me* loved. I am certain that he did every thing in his power to prejudice my father against me, and that, probably, was not difficult, owing to the indifference with which he had always regarded me. He never forgave me because I was to inherit my mother's fortune—inconsiderable compared with his, but still an ample portion that equaled the expectations of most elder sons.

“I served for a year in the Flemish wars. I need not dwell on my own praises or affect a false modesty; you know the reputation I gained; you were at Versailles when I returned, and recollect the flattering reception accorded me by the king himself.

“Fond as I was of gayety, I was glad when his Majesty gave me permission to leave court. I hurried to our beautiful



Breton home, where my father was also passing some months. It may seem to you a strange thing, to me it is very natural, but the reputation which I had achieved did not prepossess my father in my favor. His whole heart was bound up in his eldest son, and Albert's career so far from equaled his expectations that he was irritated at seeing me taking the place the elder son should have occupied.

“There was no limit to my brother's extravagance—no vice of those dissipated times into which he did not plunge with avidity. He was a great favorite at court—rich, young and handsome. For his follies I can readily find excuse; for the faults, which lay deeper founded in his character, I can not be charitable. The girl to whom he was betrothed was, as yet, almost a child, and safely immured in her convent, so there was no restraint upon his actions, and even my father could not exercise the slightest control over him.

“I found ample affection in my mother's heart. I can not describe to you all the pride and fondness which filled her lonely heart. Hers had been a gloomy life; her marriage had not been one of affection on either side. She bore in silence all the wrongs of which she was too proud to speak. She disliked the world and its gayeties, so that she and my father came little in contact. He treated her always with the polished courtesy which was a part of his nature; but to yield a wish, or to offer a sacrifice to her comfort, never occurred to him.

“Whatever others might think of my brother's errors, they caused her the most acute suffering; but she never complained. When together, he treated her with the utmost respect and consideration, although he never understood or had much affection for her, and always ridiculed the absolute adoration with which I regarded her.

“I found Adèle in her ancestral home. There followed a few short weeks of happiness, such as is seldom granted two human beings—too bright and beautiful for earth, but, alas we were too young to think of that.

old Duke de Nevers was visiting his niece, and dur-



"I went away. My first trouble broke upon me with the unexpectedness and fury of a tropical tempest; my mother died suddenly, after so brief an illness that my father had not even time to reach home before her death. I must go on. That is a memory too deep, too sacred to put into words. It was a warning of what lay beyond—my mother was *gone*.

"That season Adèle was presented at court, and became one of the reigning beauties of the day. My brother made a brief campaign, to do away with the effect of sundry exploits which had given him a somewhat unenviable reputation. Marie de Noailles had died in her convent, so that he was again a free man. For the first time in his life, he manifested a pleasure in my society, and a brotherly regard, to which I responded with honest affection.

"He had seen and known Adèle. He talked to me of her—praising her loveliness, envying my good-fortune; and I—oh, fool that I was—listened and believed that it was out of newly-awakened tenderness for me that he took an interest in my betrothed. I was mad, blind. I ought to have known his treachery—that he flattered and soothed me thus only to wound me deeper when the time came in which he could sting my heart by his baseness.

"Never once did a thought of evil cross my mind. I basked in the sunlight of hope while the hour drew near which was to uproot my happiness forever, and leave me without the power of loving any thing human again."

Frontenac broke off abruptly, and turned away his head. Montmorenci was too deeply affected to speak, and several moments they remained in silence.

Near them—so near that she checked her hurried breathing lest it should betray her presence—crouched the Indian woman, shutting her lips hard to keep back the cry of anguish, clenching her hands in the long fur of the mat upon which she lay, mad with the agony which that revelation had forced upon her soul. There was much, probably, in the narrative which she did not comprehend, but she understood that she had never been loved—that his heart was still another's—she only a plaything that served to while the gloom of a few lonely hours. She understood that, and though the cold left her limbs, it never left her heart after that night.



## CHAPTER V.

## FRONTENAC'S STORY CONTINUED.

AT length the Governor spoke again; the firelight, wavering across his face, increased the ghastly expression which the torture of those moments had given it.

"My brother told me that, on his return, he expected to be again affianced, to a cousin of Marie de Noailles; and the manner in which he spoke made me pity him when I contrasted his fate with the happiness to which I looked forward.

"Three months after, he left the army, having acquitted himself honorably in several actions, and being anxious to return to court, that he might enjoy the reputation accruing from his brief success.

"A year went by before I saw Adèle, save for a few brief hours, when we met during one of the frequent journeys in which Louis was so fond of being accompanied by his courtiers.

"I went back to Versailles. Peace had been declared, and I was free to claim the happiness for which I had waited so long. I was received by the king with the most flattering attention at a reception with which he greeted the return of his Generals. Hanault himself presented me, but I assure you that, even in that moment of triumph, I thought only of the pleasure it would give Adèle. I looked eagerly about among the brilliant crowd, but she was not there. I saw my father, whom I had not yet had an opportunity of greeting. My brother stood not far off, regarding me with a smile which I could not interpret, but which, even in that dizzy moment, filled me with strange uneasiness. It was the look he wore in our boyish days when some craft of his own had drawn our father's displeasure upon me. The king again turned toward me:

"'Chevalier,' he said, 'you are well returned to witness a new happiness in your family.'

"I managed to stammer some reply concerning my ignorance of all that had taken place in my absence, but what the words were I have no recollection.



“ ‘You have not yet been informed, I perceive,’ he added, graciously. ‘Then I shall have the pleasure of announcing the fact, and bespeaking your good wishes. Yesterday your brother was betrothed to Mademoiselle de Courvelles, the grand niece of our esteemed duke.’

“ Of the next hour I have no recollection. How I got out of the crowd I can not tell, but when I reached the apartments my father occupied, whither I had rushed with some mad idea of claiming instant vengeance, I met my brother standing upon the threshold, still wearing on his lips the mocking smile which had so often frenzied me in our boyhood.

“ I drew my sword and rushed upon him, exclaiming :

“ ‘Liar and traitor!’ but before the blow could fall, or he draw his weapon, my father sprung between us, and beat down my sword with his arm, crying :

“ ‘Fratricide ! is this your greeting to your kin ?’

“ ‘I own no kin with traitors!’ I answered. ‘I will have revenge upon this wretch who has betrayed me.’

“ Again I sprung toward him, and his fury appeared equal to my own, but my father interposed, and he lowered his sword.

“ ‘Chevalier,’ said my father, coolly, ‘restore your sword to its scabbard, or I will have you placed under arrest in five minutes. If you have any thing to say, act like a man—these brutal manners may answer for the camp, but at court we are little accustomed to them.’

“ The cutting irony of his words restored me to at least an appearance of composure. I put my sword away, and stood looking in their faces.

“ ‘Let me hear every thing,’ I said ; ‘who planned this treachery ?’

“ My brother turned away with a muttered curse, but my father stood perfectly still, wearing a placid smile and dusting some particles of powder from his sleeve.

“ ‘Who planned this treachery ?’ I repeated. ‘Speak ! I demand an explanation.’

“ Really, chevalier, you employ such extraordinary phrases that I am quite unable to understand you.’

“ ‘Let him hear and then go,’ interrupted my brother ; ‘I would not advise him to cross my path again.’



“My father silenced him by a wave of the hand.

“‘Speak the truth, if your false tongue will permit the truth for once,’ I exclaimed, turning toward Albert. ‘How did you succeed in stealing my affianced bride—how did you accomplish this crowning treachery of your miserable life?’

“‘Gently, gently!’ said the count, when my brother would have retorted with passion equal to my own. ‘I claim the privilege of giving any information that the chevalier may require, and I detest loud talking.’

“‘Sir,’ I answered, ‘this trifling is unworthy the name of Frontenac—base in a father.’

“‘*Mon dieu!* I can’t help being a father; I do assure you no man ever regretted the circumstance more than I—pray, reconcile me to it by a little suavity of manner.’

“‘I ask an explanation, Monsieur; if I can not have it from you, then I must seek those who will speak.’

“‘I shall offer it with pleasure, chevalier,’ he returned, calmly as before, while I chafed like a wild animal, and my brother was only prevented giving expression to his rage by the count’s presence.

“‘The Duke de Nevers, the guardian and natural protector of Mademoiselle de Courvelles,’ continued my father, with galling composure, ‘was pleased to accept my overtures for my eldest son.’

“‘She was promised to me—you and the duke both gave me your word.’

“‘My dear chevalier, that was the mere folly of boyhood—it pleased the two dear mothers to weave a little romance, and neither the duke nor I objected; but such weakness must give way to affairs of importance. When my eldest son became free by the melancholy death of Mademoiselle de Noailles, the duke naturally objected to seeing his grand-niece and heiress married to a younger son, when the heir was attainable; consequently, he would hear of no such offer.’

“‘Nor the young lady either,’ added my brother.

“‘That is only another falsehood,’ I answered; ‘you know that she loved me.’

“My father regaled himself with a pinch of snuff, and regarded me with the tranquil curiosity he might have bestowed upon some wild and unknown animal.



“ ‘Really, chevalier,’ he said, ‘I should think you had just arrived from Arcadia, instead of the wars. Where in the name of wonder did you pick up such extraordinary ideas and expressions. Well-reared young ladies, like my future daughter-in-law, think as their elders bid them. I am very sure my old friend, the duke, never taught his niece such remarkable lessons.’

“ ‘I could not longer endure this trifling—it was driving me wholly mad.

“ ‘Then this is irrevocable?’ I gasped.

“ ‘Undoubtedly. His Majesty was graciously pleased to announce it to you himself.’

“ ‘We shall meet again!’ I exclaimed, turning toward my brother. He replied only by a gesture of menace. I rushed from the room. I hurried to the hotel de Nevers, but could not gain admittance. For two days I must have been wholly insane. I tremble to think what the consequences would have been had I met my brother; but my father guarded well against that, although I am certain that Albert was as eager as myself for the conflict.

“ ‘On the third day I saw my father; he had lost none of his composure. The king desired to see me. There was no appeal, and I presented myself before his Majesty. I was to be sent to Spain—my father’s plan for relieving himself of my presence. I absolutely refused unless they granted me one interview with Adèle.

“ ‘My father heard me out with the same ironical courtesy—accompanied me himself to the old duke and urged my plea. It was at first refused. I must have acted like a madman, for I startled my father out of his calmness and the old duke out of his iron obstinacy.

“ ‘You shall see her,’ he said, at last; ‘perhaps her own avowal will convince you of your folly and madness.’

“ ‘I hope you are content, chevalier,’ said my father, struggling to regain his composure. ‘I never knew that insanity was in our family, but upon my word, your conduct makes me inclined to bless the man who invented strait-jackets.’ I answered not a word; I sat in stony silence, while the duke left the room to prepare Adèle for the meeting. I have a distinct recollection of seeing my father amusing himself with a



bouquet of flowers—pulling the petals to pieces one by one—it seemed to me that it was my own heart he held in his gentle but ruthless grasp.

“At length the duke returned.

“‘Mademoiselle is in the drawing-room,’ he said, coldly. ‘The chevalier can enter.’

“‘Then we do not assist at the interesting ceremony?’ sneered my father.

“‘My daughter is with Mademoiselle,’ returned the duke, in an irritated voice. ‘Pray, go at once, sir, and then find common sense to end these scenes.’

“I passed through the antechambers until I reached the drawing-room.

“Adèle was seated near one of the windows, with her face partially turned from the light. The duke’s daughter, a cold, passionless woman, was seated in an arm-chair toward the middle of the room—far enough away to allow us to converse with comparative freedom.

“When I saw Adèle’s face, the frenzied hopes with which I had been trying to brighten my despair fell dead—I knew that all was over.

“She sat there like a statue, not even raising her eyes when I approached. She looked so completely exhausted by mental and physical excitement that she had not even strength to lift the lids. I was thankful that, during those days of insanity, I had never once harbored a harsh thought of her—never once accused her of faithlessness or any wrong toward the future which they had wrested from us.

“I must have stood there several moments in utter silence. At length she looked up—as our eyes met, a simultaneous cry broke from each, to see how the other was changed.

“‘Adèle! Adèle!’ I cried.

“She could not speak; she sat trembling in every limb, while I fell on my knees before her, regardless of the presence of her aunt, and covered her hands with passionate kisses. She tried to withdraw them from my clasp, saying with an effort—

“‘Not thus—we must not meet thus.’

“‘Is it true?’ I cried. ‘Have they parted us forever?’

“She looked at me with a patient smile, fuller of grief than any burst of weeping could have been.



“ ‘Only for this world,’ she whispered; ‘the hereafter ~~will~~ be ours with God; nothing but divine authority can reach us *there*.’

“ ‘You will not consent to this!’ I exclaimed. ‘You are my wife—promised to me—you will not let them tear you from me?’

“ She was so weak and exhausted that my violence took away all her strength. She leaned back in her chair faint and struggling for breath, putting up her hand to motion me into silence.

“ ‘You do not blame me,’ she said, after a pause; ‘you do not think that I have consented weakly to this thing?’

“ ‘No, no; I have not blamed you! But why have you allowed it to go on—why did you not send for me—we might have—’

“ ‘Hush! hush! It was impossible! There was only one way open, and I was forced to walk therein.’

“ ‘But your mother loved me—she desired our marriage.’

“ ‘Poor mother! I am saving her, Charles,’ she continued, speaking more rapidly, while the crimson of excitement spread over her cheeks. ‘It was through her the blow came—if I did not consent, the duke would shut her up in a convent—he had the power—some old follies in which there was no wrong placed her in his power.’

“ I cursed him madly in my heart, as she went on:

“ ‘You see, struggle as I might, there was no alternative. I wanted to see you, Charles, for the last time—it was best. We must not meet again—never again this side of eternity.’

“ She spoke so calmly another might have thought her unmoved. I could read the death in her heart—her fortitude made me ashamed of my own weakness. Then I realized that life was indeed at an end—nothing left but the mere semblance of existence—that I must go on toward the grave with no hopes in common with my kind—watching their joys, their ambitions, like a ghost regarding the world in which he can take no part.

“ I did not even dare plead with her to fly with me beyond the power of our unnatural enemies; her mother’s safety and life stood between us—I was powerless to save her; bound hand and foot, I must watch her sink beneath the sea.



“ ‘You will die,’ I groaned, ‘you will die!’

“ ‘It may be so,’ she said, with the same strange calmness. God is very good.’

“ We were silent again. Of what avail could words be in a parting like that?

“ ‘You will go away?’ she said, after a time. ‘You promise me to go at once?’

“ I could not refuse—I gave her my promise.

“ ‘You will not seek your brother; you will have no altercation?’

“ I was silent; how could I promise that?

“ ‘Remember, you will torture me if you do,’ she continued. ‘Charles, Charles, promise me.’

“ Her voice broke into a wail of passionate pain. I could not refuse; I would have died for her had she bidden me—it was all I could do.

“ ‘I promise,’ I said, hiding my eyes to shut out the anguish in her face.

“ ‘I knew you would—I trusted you. We must part now—only for a time, Charles; we shall meet there.’

“ She pointed upward, and I knelt before her in silence.

“ Oh! I can not go on; I do not remember what we said; I know that at last she sunk fainting in her chair; her aunt approached and forced me away. As I passed the apartment where my father and the duke stood, the former looked out, saying, with the old smile:

“ ‘I think he has started for Charenton; it is well.’

“ They were the last words I ever heard him speak; we never met again.”

The Governor paused once more. Montmorenci only clasped his hand in silence—there was no comfort to offer.

And in the darkness Chileli crouched, waiting for the end—growing colder and colder.



## CHAPTER VI.

## CONCLUSION OF FRONTENAC'S STORY.

"A WEEK after, I left France forever. At my request the king changed my appointment to a colonial one, and I sailed for Canada without exchanging farewells with any human being. A fortnight after my departure, Adèle was married to my brother.

"For seventeen years my home has been in this wilderness. You know how I gradually rose, thanks to his Majesty's kindness, until I reached the position I now hold. There is still more to tell you—a sad, sad portion of my life, because it has brought me great pain and remorse for the evil I have brought upon one good and innocent as the wild violets that open in the forest from which I brought her."

As he spoke these words slowly and with an effort, the Indian woman half raised herself from the floor; every nerve was strained to its utmost tension to preserve the deathlike stillness which had kept her undiscovered so long.

"I had been in Canada two years, when I was sent to attack a party of hostile Indians, and was so severely wounded that I was obliged to discontinue my journey while still far from Quebec. We had reached a tract belonging to the French, and inhabited by friendly savages. I was left with my servant, (who was a fair surgeon,) and a small guard, in the lodge of an Indian woman, the widow of the principal chief of the tribe.

"I am certain that her hatred of the whites was the strongest part of her religion, but her craft and dissimulation were equal to it, and she bestowed on me every attention in her power.

"One day when my strength had begun to return, I was sitting in the door of the lodge, basking feebly in the sunshine, with the dull feeling of content which comes over one after a painful illness. I heard a sweet voice speaking in the Indian tongue, and saw before me one of the brightest creatures I ever beheld; it was the old woman's daughter.



“She was not fifteen, but she looked older. In short, she was that rare creature, a beautiful savage. The old woman spoke to her angrily. I understood their language. It seemed that she had been sent away on my arrival, and was not to return until after my departure; but I learned later from her own lips that she had seen me and could not keep her promise. The girl was shy as a deer, but not in the least timid.

“‘Chileli has brought the white brave some fish,’ she said, in delicious broken French, holding out a string of delicate brook-trout. ‘She will kindle a fire and cook them. He shall eat and be strong.’

“She sat down near me and held the mottled fish up, that I might see how fresh they were, regardless of her mother’s frowns. The old woman snatched the fish from her hold and ordered her away.

“Then I added my wish to her pleading, and the old woman could not refuse me, for I was the representative of a power that she dared not oppose.

“The girl went away to cook the trout, and after that remained with her mother. Ah, poor Chileli, it was a fatal curiosity that led her to watch for the coming of the white chief! Not for a diadem would I have brought a sorrow upon the innocent creature, but I was in a singular state of mind. Had I been in full health, the idea of speaking words of love to any woman would have seemed sacrilege to Adèle’s memory; but I was lonely, weak, sad—grateful to any thing that loved me; and this beautiful child of the forest had no art to conceal her feelings. She was a strange and singularly-gifted creature—so far lifted above her people in native refinement that I could not think of her as a savage. Her beauty, so remarkable, was the least charm of her presence.

“A certain wild poetry had always permeated the girl’s nature, concerning which she was too ignorant to speculate or even to understand the difference which it made between her and her savage companions.

“The wind spoke to her in strange murmurs, like the echoes of a language which she half understood; the brooks and waterfalls which she so loved to haunt sung melodies to her ear which her playmates could never catch; the very wild-flowers seemed to her to feel and thrill responsive to her



touch, until her wild soul, in all its blindness, went closer to nature than that of many a poet whose lays have been read by half the world.

“Remember, Montmorenci, I was all alone, with no claims, no ties on my love or my affections. This young creature was fresh, wild, natural as a bird. I loved to have her with me—to watch the play of her bright, pure feelings. Still, I did not dream of making her my own.

“A month elapsed before I was well enough to continue my journey. When Chileli learned that I was indeed going off, she gave way to a paroxysm of grief, which made me tremble for her life. I felt then how dear she was to me; I could not bear to part with the only being that loved me.

“‘You have stolen my child’s heart out of her bosom,’ the mother said, bitterly. ‘She found the white brave in her mother’s lodge; she tended him gently, and he rewards her by stealing away like a fox.’

“I was silent—I had no reply.

“Then, I reflected, was it not better to take Chileli with me than to leave her to pining her heart out in the wilderness? I would be kind and gentle with her; in her genuine affection I might sometimes forget the trouble which had left me an outcast from a foreign land. Love was out of the question, but I was very lonely.

“‘Give her to me,’ I said; ‘she shall be kindly treated in my lodge on the great river.’

“The girl threw herself at her mother’s feet with a passionate abandon, which I had not believed possible in Indian nature. For an instant the old woman looked as if she would have spurned her in fury. I can not tell what sudden policy or craft made her pause, but after a short silence she said:

“‘Abmo will consult with the chiefs of the tribe; her daughter can not be bought like a common squaw.’

“She turned away; the council-fire was kindled; in an hour the savages gave me an answer—Chileli was mine.

“‘Go with us to the settlement,’ I said, ‘and you shall see her made my wife according to our law.’

“‘I will not permit it,’ the old woman exclaimed. ‘The medicine-man of our tribe will give her to you—be satisfied.’

“It was so arranged; Chileli became my wife according to



the rites of their nation, and I brought her with me to Quebec. A year after a child was born ; I called her Katharine, but Chileli calls her Mahaska. She and Chileli have since lived in my house. You can understand how bitterly I repented this mad act when it was too late ; what a living reproach the poor girl's love has been to me for years. I have been kind to her, but she must often have mourned over my coldness and silence. There are times when I can not bear her presence ; then she endures my mood with such patient submission that it tortures my very soul.

"The child is now thirteen years of age, beautiful as her mother, but with a fire and spirit which her tender nature never possessed. She has been a pet and plaything with me ; but now, when I reflect that she is indeed my daughter, I shudder at the future which I may have brought upon her.

"Against my express orders old Ahmo left her tribe, and has established herself during a portion of every year upon an island opposite the great Falls. Chileli will at times visit her, and the woman manages to see the child in spite of all I can do. I am sometimes startled by the fierce, savage spirit that breaks out through all the girl's beauty ; and, as yet, from her own dislike, she has been little trained in the studies of the whites, although she learns readily any thing that pleases her fancy.

"I have done. Pity me a little, good friend ; do not blame me too much. Now I feel that my destiny has changed. I tell you my brother is dead ; my gentle love is perhaps free. I dare not think of what may follow !"

He broke off abruptly as he had begun. The dawn was stealing through the curtains cold and gray ; the fire had died low, and the room was bitter cold.

"Go to your bed, friend," Frontenac said. "I am going to walk in the gallery ; don't speak to me yet."

Montmorenci passed into his room in silence, closing the door behind him. After a brief interval, Frontenac arose, wrapped a heavy cloak about him, and went out into the great corridor, the chill striking pleasantly upon his forehead, which was burning with fever. When they were both gone, the Indian woman struggled slowly to her feet, and, with death in her face, crept out of the chamber.



## CHAPTER VII.

## A PORTENT.

A FORTNIGHT after the storm, the French frigate had left the harbor, and the Governor was once more deprived of even the poor solace which his friend's companionship had given. But, although his youthful friendship for the man had revived with its former warmth, Frontenac felt the departure of the vessel a sort of relief.

The gay spirits of the young officers and idle nobles who had accompanied them from a love of adventure, wearied him; even Montmorenci's presence was a restraint in the state of feeling which followed the strange warning of that night.

For days he could not shake off the vividness of that impression. It was consistent with his character that he never once tried to mock his own heart with any imputation of having dwelt weakly upon a superstitious folly.

During the time his guests were hovering about the castle, Frontenac scarcely saw Chileli, and then only casually; his mind was too engrossed by the thoughts and the unusual business which pressed upon him to give much heed to her appearance.

She had a habit of disappearing whenever guests thus visited him, so that it was no matter for surprise. He sometimes felt confident that she took advantage of those occasions to see her mother often, but wisely forbore to notice it. This time he did not even attempt to inquire into the movements of his child and her mother.

He was glad to have them out of his sight during the first bitterness of those days, and mingled with that feeling was an increased sentiment of pity for the unfortunate pair, which made him shrink from paining the mother through her young child, or by any undue interference with her movements. One day he met Chileli, face to face, in the corridor near his apartments. It struck him that her first movement was an impulse to go away and avoid his sight, but he only ascribed



to the fact of his having so seldom sent for her of late. Even giving her action that construction, he felt a pang of self-reproach; had he dreamed of the truth, it would have been a bitter addition to his pain.

"Ah, wild-bird," he said, trying to speak affectionately, "whither are you fleeing?"

"Chileli has been in the Governor's chamber," she answered, in her native language; "the child, Katharine, had gathered some flowers, which she wished placed there."

"And why did she not come herself?"

Chileli was silent; she did not choose to complain of his neglect, nor would she speak the truth concerning her daughter, which was, the fiery-hearted creature refused to approach her father until he had given some sign of desiring her presence.

"I see how it is," he said, trying to smile, "the little witch is in one of her furies. Come, Chileli, we will go and see her together; perhaps she will condescend to forgive me then."

He took her hand kindly, but soon let it drop, unable to overcome the feeling of repugnance which crossed him when he felt the touch of the delicate fingers.

As they turned away, the light from one of the windows fell upon her face; he was absolutely startled by the change which those weeks had wrought in it.

She had grown thin; her complexion had lost its clearness; her great eyes had an expression of melancholy which could only have been caused by intense pain.

"Are you ill, Chileli?" he asked, greatly disturbed.

She shook her head.

"Surely you are not fretting because I have been so much occupied?" he continued, while an impatience he could not subdue sprung up in the midst of his anxiety.

"Chileli is content to await the white chief's pleasure," she replied, meekly. "She will never trouble him." Her words were checked by a violent fit of coughing, which she tried vainly to restrain.

"What does this mean?" he asked. "You are sick with this frightful cold. How did you get it?"

She could not tell him the truth--that he had crushed her



heart by revelations of that terrible night, but it was true. There had been no warmth in her bosom since. Besides her mental agony, there was a very natural reason for the physical effect it had produced upon her. She had spent the night in her drenched garments, and her habits of life since she left the forest, so luxurious and full of ease, compared with the old one, had unfitted her to bear either exposure or violent fatigue.

"My physician must see you at once," he said. "I shall send for him."

She did not oppose him; it was not for her to dispute his slightest wish; but she smiled drearily as she felt the impossibility of a cure to pain like that which throbbled at her heart.

"You must keep in the house," he continued, all his generous impulses aroused by her appearance. "Promise me that, Chileli."

"If the white chief desires it," she answered.

"Have you forgotten your French?" he asked, making an effort to smile.

She shivered through all her frame; since that night it was very painful for her to speak a word of his language. In her childish way she connected its accents with her trouble, and shrunk from pronouncing them.

"The wild thrush loves its own notes best, although it may sometimes mock the songs of other birds," she replied, in the figurative language which made her conversation so original and so full of poetry.

Frontenac attempted to make some affectionate answer, but could not. He laid his hand caressingly on her shoulder, but when he felt her tremble under his touch, the same feeling of repugnance came over him. In spite of all his efforts, all his scruples, she had been swept completely out of the heart where she had always held so light a place.

"I want you to see the doctor at once," he said, when she began coughing again. "Will you promise me to take the medicines he gives you?"

"Chileli will obey," she replied, in the same submissive tone.

"It is for your own good, child; you will be very ill if you neglect this terrible cold."



Chileli simply bowed her head. His impulse was to turn away, but he subdued the ungenerous feeling, and went on talking kindly to her.

"Come," he said, "let us go now and see Katharine; I must buy my peace with her if I can."

"If Mahaska sees love in the chief's heart, she will be content," returned Chileli, calling her child by her Indian name.

"Then come and let us make the trial," he returned.

He walked rapidly toward her apartment, and Chileli followed, but her heart seemed breaking as they entered the room which was now haunted by the ghost of the happiness she could never know again.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### CULMINATION OF A SORROW.

THE early Canadian winter set in with all its rigor and severity. To Frontenac it was a terribly lonely season, perhaps the most utterly desolate of his whole life. The feeling of repugnance which had sprung up in his mind toward Chileli grew every day stronger and deeper in spite of all his efforts to subdue it; no gentleness of manner when they met could atone for it. She understood his feelings with the quickness of her sex, and it increased the deep despair which was wearing her life out.

The sufferings of the poor creature were fearful, but she bore them in silence. Physical pain was something so new to her, that she would hardly have known how to endure it even without the addition of that mental woe which kept her without rest either by day or night.

The Governor saw that she was failing, but he could not understand all her sufferings, so he only reproached himself for ever having taken her out of her native wilderness, believing that the great change in her life was the principal cause of her failing strength.

The girl Katharine did not dream of her mother's danger, indeed, all the love she had to give was centered upon her.



father, whom she regarded with overweening pride and tenderness. She sought his presence whenever he would permit, and he grew accustomed to her society. It was less irksome to have her near him than Chileli, and he flattered himself that the mother would never consider herself neglected while he exhibited such fondness for her child.

So the winter wore on, while slowly but surely Chileli's disease increased. It was almost imperceptible in its progress; often for days she would appear much better, her eyes had more than their old brilliancy, and there was a feverish animation about her which deceived Frontenac. Even the physician was inclined to think that her constitution, so much stronger and more vigorous than that of a white woman, would be able to throw off the besetting malady, and that when spring came, the warm weather and the freedom of her native forests would gradually restore her to health. There was only one who doubted or suspected the truth. Old Ahmo, her mother, believed that the Governor was knowingly killing her child. Hence her fierce hatred toward the whites grew every day, until it almost became insanity. She did not venture to intrude in the castle when Frontenac could know of her presence there, but she often found means of seeing her daughter—day and night she was on the watch.

Bold and courageous as he was, the Governor might well have trembled, could he have known the fury that was being nursed in her heart like fire in some heathen shrine waiting for its victim, since with her, revenge was an instinct of religion, an offering to appease the soul of her daughter when it should pass forth to the happy hunting-grounds.

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Months had elapsed since the departure of the frigate which brought the visit from Montmorenci. A French vessel was expected, and Frontenac awaited its arrival with an impatience of which a year before he would have believed himself incapable. He did not allow his thoughts to dwell clearly upon the subject. He shut out of his mind every fancy; but the vague anxiety with which he anticipated the arrival of the ship would not be quieted.

Chileli saw and understood his impatience, but she did not speak a word which could have given a suspicion of her



thoughts. She would watch him from some place of concealment, as he walked to and fro in the long corridors, his anxious face and hurried movements bearing evidence of the fever that burned within. She, too, waited, patiently, submissively for the last blow which should utterly uproot the poor life struggling in her breast.

There came news of the arrival of the vessel. The ice in the St. Lawrence prevented its going up to Quebec, but on day a swift runner brought the intelligence. In a few hours the strangers would be there with dispatches for the Governor.

Frontenac shut himself up in his room—he would not have any human eye upon him during that hour of keen expectation. But he could not escape the vigilance of the poor Indian—from her place of concealment she watched him still.

Chileli saw the boat land and knew that her destiny was coming. She stole through the secret staircase and hid herself behind the drapery, pale, trembling and panting for breath. Her feeble limbs shook and bent under her, as she saw a servant enter and place a package of letters on the table at which Frontenac was sitting. He hesitated to touch them; clasped his hands hard on the table, and looked at the sealed documents with a sort of superstitious terror. Then he reached out one hand, turned the papers over and selected one from the mass. Breathless and pale as a criminal waiting for his sentence, he broke the seal and read. He started wildly, and might have uttered an exclamation, but the white lips only moved. Covering his face, he sat still and white with the letters before him.

It was true, his brother had died *that night*.

He now was Count Frontenac. His old life of pain might end, if such things ever end. Suddenly his hand fell from his face, which was revealed so pale and convulsed with anguish that Chileli was struck with profound compassion. She knew that he was thinking of her—that she, with her aching heart and frail life, was all the impediment that lay between him and happiness. The thought sent a hot fever-flush to her cheek, a strange feeling of tightness girdled itself about her chest. She crept away down the stairs and into her own room, or lodge, as the Governor was used to call it, for there her savage taste had been left to expand itself unmolested



The walls and ceilings were hung with hunting-implements, bows and arrows, rifles and tomahawks, whose uses she had formerly taught her child, when the hours of her solitude hung heavily upon them. Two couches of rich fur, one for herself the other for her child, were spread in the opposite end of the room. On one lay her little girl, asleep. She fell upon the other, gasping painfully for breath—a sickening sense of relief set her breath free; but with it came a gush of blood which she strove to hold back with both hands clasped over her mouth. Several vials of medicine stood on a little table by the couch: she seized one and drank some of its contents.

While the vial was in her hand, the door opened and Ahmo came in. It was one of her sudden and unexpected visits. She saw the vial and the blood on Chileli's lips, and rushed toward her, speaking wild Indian words and snatching the vial from that poor weak hand. She looked at the fluid; held it up to the light; shook it fiercely, thrust the cork into the vial and that into her bosom.

Then she sat down by the couch, washed those red lips, and talked to the broken-hearted creature in her wild, Indian tongue. Chileli spoke but little; still the words she uttered were those of dreary assent.

Ahmo took up the coverlet of fur by its border of crimson cloth, folded it over that shadowy form and lifted the poor creature in her arms.

"My child, Mahaska," murmured the young mother.

"Be still; she shall come," answered Ahmo, and lifting the mournful burden in her arms, the Indian woman went out of the castle noiselessly as she had entered it.

Again the old woman appeared; aroused the girl from her slumbers, and led her away, filled with rebellious wonder. The girl followed her grandmother down a steep path cut in the precipice to the lower town and through that to the water's edge. There she found her mother lying in the bottom of a canoe, her eyes closed, and her lips white as death.

Ahmo lifted the girl into the light craft, bade her sit down, and raising that beautiful head, laid it tenderly in Mahaska's lap. The girl stooped down and pressed a passionate kiss on the still forehead. The canoe shot into the St. Lawrence, and floated downward, carrying away its heavy freight of sorrow.



## CHAPTER IX.

## THE DEATH COUCH.

CHILELI lay down in her mother's lodge to die. She was too feeble for complaint, too gentle in her humility for anything but submission. It seemed right that she should creep away and perish, since her presence could no longer bring pleasure to the white brave. She had never dreamed it possible to make the least resistance to his will; her whole life had been bound up in his affection, and when that was removed existence itself faded out with it.

The day after she reached the lodge, Chileli lay upon the couch her mother had spread, white and exhausted. The sound of dashing waters from the Falls fell upon her ear with soothing influence. The spring birds were chirping in the fresh young leaves, and a soft, balmy air stole in through the open door. The little girl had gone out into the woods; she was altogether too wild for any sympathy with her mother's illness. Ahmo lingered near the door, stripping the feathers from a tiny bird which she had shot for her daughter's repast. Her eyes were heavy, her face stern. She forgot her dainty task, and tore away at the delicate feathers with fierce clutches.

"Mother," said Chileli, in a voice so faint that nothing but a heart listening always through its pain could have heard it, "mother."

The woman laid down the bird, brushed the feathers from her hands, and entered the lodge.

"Mother, I hear the voice of the great Manitou through the surging of the waters. Look, he has stung a bridge across the great flood, that Chileli may walk to the Indian hunting-grounds and not be afraid."

The poor creature pointed with her shadowy finger to the Falls, where a rainbow formed a perfect arch of quivering sapphire, opal, ruby and emerald light. It did, indeed, look like a gossamer bridge over which angels and spirits of beauty alone might pass.



"Mother, Chileli is going. They want her over yonder, but her heart holds back. It waits for him. Chileli will not die till he looks in her eyes again."

A pang seized upon the old woman. She had snatched her child from the power of her white destroyer—for so she honestly believed the Governor to be—and now, when the broken-hearted one is all her own, a cry went up from her soul asking for *his* presence. It was a cry that reached even her savage heart through all its wrath and grief.

Chileli had never spoken to her mother of the mournful secret that had broken her young life. There was no desire for vengeance in that gentle heart. Her nature had been subdued and refined by love into something so gentle and tender that she had no room for the fierce revolt that swelled in her mother's bosom.

"Mother."

The old woman came close to her daughter's couch, her eyes heavy with grief, yet with a gleam of rage shining through all.

"Ahmo listens."

"Go and tell my white brave that Chileli's wife, is dying. She only waits for him. The bridge must not break and sink back into the sky before he comes."

Chileli paused a moment, and her eyes rested anxiously on the beautiful waterfall lighted up with the glory of that quivering rainbow. Katharine had not yet returned, so that the old woman was alone with her child.

"Chileli hears strange voices in the wind," she said, turning slowly from the light.

"What do they whisper in her ear?" asked Ahmo.

"They whisper of him and his words when he loved her. They say that Chileli must go forth to-night. Chileli must leave her mother and her child, but not till she has seen him."

Even in her grief the old woman did not relinquish her determination to know the whole truth of her suspicions, for she did suspect the Governor of a terrible crime.

"Will Chileli go to meet her father in the happy hunting-grounds with a secret on her lips?" she asked.

The sick woman stirred restlessly under the burning glances fixed upon her.



"What does Ahmo mean?" she said, evasively.

"Chileli is cheating her mother—it is not well. She must open her heart and speak. She can not die without. Ahmo will not summon the white brave till Chileli speaks truth."

Chileli was silent, and the woman went on:

"The great Manitou will be angry with his child for going away without speaking. The hunting-grounds will be clouded to her sight. Let Chileli open her lips that Nemono may be satisfied."

The secret, which even the weakness of death could not have wrung from her lips, struggled up to them at that warning.

"Sit here by Chileli," she said, faintly; "she will speak."

The old woman obeyed her command, sitting with her face turned away from the dying girl, that she might not perceive the terrible expression which settled over it as she listened.

"He never loved Chileli. She came to him like a wild-bird in the wilderness, and while his great heart was full of another, he took her that she might sing to him."

"When did Chileli learn this?" asked Ahmo.

"That night when Ahmo took her home through the storm. A foreign chief was in his room that night, and they held a talk. Chileli lay by the fire like a dog that dares not lick his master's hand. She heard of the white lady that always filled his heart so full that the poor Indian could never creep in. Mother—mother, there is a woman over the big waters that he has always loved."

Her voice was shrill and clear, her eyes bright with anguish. She started up, clenching her thin hands on her bosom.

"That sent the arrow here; nothing could pull it out. Chileli will go to the great hunting-grounds with the wound aching—aching—aching."

"But that was not all. He came to hate Chileli. She was a bitter weed in his heart. He gave her poison from his glittering bottles, that filled her bosom with fire. Ahmo knows poison when she sees it," cried the old woman, mad with anguish.

Chileli fell back, gasping for breath, her great eyes wild with the terrible thought which shot like an arrow through her death-pangs.



"No, no," she gasped, after a struggle, "no, no, no; he never did that. It was to make Chileli well he gave the drops. He is brave, he is good—Chileli loves him. Chileli dies because he can not love her. That is all. Chileli has spoken; let Ahmo take her canoe and bring the white brave that he may see how gladly Chileli can die, that he may be happy with that beautiful pale-face who waits for him over the great waters. Go, mother, go. If Chileli dies before he comes, Manitou will never let Ahmo find her child in the great hunting-grounds."

Ahmo arose. She was not softened. Her thoughts were full of bitter hate and fell suspicion; but she arose in silence and prepared to go.

The tale was told, and Chileli lay back upon her furs completely exhausted by her effort, while the old woman for a moment stood motionless in her place.

"I hear the voice of Mahaska," said Chileli, rousing herself suddenly; "bid her come into the lodge."

The old woman went to the door and summoned the girl. Katharine threw herself down by her mother's side, comprehending the scene at a glance. She was silent under her awe and grief. Chileli folded her arms feebly about her, speaking at intervals a few broken words of tenderness, then her eyes turned again upon Ahmo.

The woman bent her head in sullen acquiescence, and left the lodge. Chileli listened till she heard the sound of oars dipping swiftly in the water; then she closed her eyes, a soft smile stole over her lips, and, with both arms around her child, she fell into a tranquil sleep.

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Night settled on the island—one of those calm nights of early summer, that are made heavenly by soft moonbeams and delicious odors. Chileli had slept for hours, but she was awake now, and lay in passive waiting, with her eyes fixed upon the lunar rainbow that hung over the Falls. The child had become weary of the stillness, and lay coiled up on the floor in the deep unconsciousness of healthy slumber.

All at once came a loud dash of oars, broken one moment by a murmur of voices, and then quick footsteps came up from the river—footsteps that made the blood, already congealing



in Chileli's heart, leap free again, and the smile upon her lips shone out beautifully in the moonlight.

"Chileli, Chileli, my poor child, why did you leave me—why—why?"

The voice of the proud, stern man was broken with sobs. He fell upon his knees by that barbarian couch, and lifted the shadowy form in his strong arms.

Chileli raised her arms, and wound them about his neck. Her cheek rested against his. She whispered:

"Chileli dies that her brave may be happy. From her place in the far hunting-ground she will guard his ship across the great waters that he may find the beautiful pale-face."

The words ended in a faint, gasping sob. Then all was still in that noble heart. But there was no pause in nature; the greatest soul that ever left earth does not disturb a current of air, more or less, as it goes forth to eternity. So the winds sighed among the great forest-trees without a hush, the lunar rainbow trembled over the Falls, and the river plunged on without a change.

## CHAPTER X.

### FRONTENAC'S NEW HOPE.

DID Frontenac grieve over the death of that poor Indian girl? Alas, on this earth there is no grief so bitter and hard to endure as that which springs from self-reproach, or from a consciousness that the dead who loved us have not met with full return of affection. Could that proud man have brought Chileli to life with all he possessed on earth, he would have done it, though her life would have made him miserable again—so great was his pity, so mournfully did he remember her sacred love for him. His very freedom seemed like a fraud upon her. How bitterly he wept, how earnestly he prayed in the stillness of that night, with the dead woman lying before him, no human being will ever know. Ahmo had seated herself in a corner of the lodge, and, with both hands clasped over her knees, and her face bent to her bosom, sat.



after the fashion of her people, motionless as death itself. The child Katharine, or Mahaska, lay coiled up on the floor, sound asleep, for the gentle life of her mother went out, and no one had thought of arousing her.

When daylight came, Ahmo arose and began to prepare the dead for its last resting-place. The Governor made no resistance. He had no heart to interfere.

"Let the poor child of the forest rest in the forest," he murmured, sadly. "Would to Heaven I had left her there."

So Ahmo crowned that pale head with a gorgeous coronet of feathers, and wrapped the shadowy form in a robe of delicately embroidered doeskin. From beneath the furs she took one of those boxes which the Indians embroider so lavishly with tinted grasses and porcupine quills, and took from it a string of great oriental pearls, and some trinkets of Florentine gold, which smote the Governor with a new pang of sorrow, for he remembered giving her these things in the early days of their union, when he had hoped to win her into a semblance of civilization.

These trinkets the poor woman had never parted with, and even in the hurry of her removal from the castle, had cried piteously that they should be brought too. So Ahmo drew the great white pearls around that dusky neck, and clasped the rings in her cold ears, while Frontenac looked on and shuddered.

They buried Chileli on the shore, beneath a great elm that hung half over the water, and close by a thicket of sweet-brier. When all was over, Frontenac said a few kind words to the old woman, to which she listened in dead silence, and taking Katharine by the hand, would have led her to his barge which lay waiting. The child walked with him passively half-way to the water, then, with a sudden wrench, she tore her hand from his grasp, and, uttering a cry of thrilling anguish, fled back, and lay down by her mother's grave, moaning there.

"Let the child stay. Ahmo will bring her to the castle when her heart is still," said the Indian woman, in a cold voice, that chilled the unhappy Governor.

He would not refuse her, and the child was left behind.

Ahmo watched the boat which bore Frontenac up the



river, with a terrible look. The softness of grief left her face. It grew hard as iron. She took no heed of the moaning child, but went back into the lodge, calling a little dog which had been the companion of her solitude to follow her.

When once within the lodge, she took a vial from her bosom, half full of some dark liquid. It was a strong preparation of opium, such as physicians use to still the last pangs of consumption; but of its nature Ahmo was ignorant. She had in her life distilled poisons from roots which took the same tint, and the knowledge wrought terribly upon her when she thought of her daughter's death-agonies. She sat down upon the floor, took the dog in her lap, and, opening his mouth, poured the liquid down his throat. The poor creature struggled fiercely, but she held him in a grasp of iron, and, locking his jaws together with her hands, held him firmly till the last drop was swallowed.

The potion took rapid effect, and, after a few wild rushes up and down the lodge, followed by staggering efforts to rise, he fell down, closed his eyes, and never opened them again.

Then a wild, ringing laugh broke from the woman, and, standing up, with her face to the east, she muttered what seemed to be an oath in the Indian tongue.

After this she went down to the grove, took Mahaska by the shoulder, and bore her to a canoe, which was directly urged toward Quebec.

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Frontenac mourned deeply for the poor Indian girl he had buried. For a time, her memory, and the shock of her hard death, kept all other thoughts from his mind; but after a while all this softened down into tender regret, and he no longer strove to keep the great truth from his mind that he was a free man—that the love of his first years was free as himself to seek the happiness that had been snatched from him so cruelly.

There was no hardness or vengeance in Frontenac's nature. He did not rejoice at his brother's death, but it would not have been in human power to affect grief. Besides that, he had for months been as certain that he was the last of his line as if he had made one of the funeral procession which



followed the count to the tomb of his ancestors. The title and family estate were now his. It was, therefore, necessary that he should start for France as soon as possible. His dispatches brought a leave of absence from the king, although there was a wish, amounting to a command, that, for the present at least, he would not resign his position.

When the child Katharine learned that the Governor was going across the sea, to be absent many months, she was wild with grief and passion. The Governor had kept his intentions secret from her until the day before his departure, to avoid the wild tempest of sorrow that he knew would follow the announcement. Katharine was unlike her mother in every thing but her personal beauty, and there was dissimilarity even in that.

When the news was revealed to her, she received it with angry bursts of sorrow, flung her arms impetuously around his neck, and declared that he should not go—that she would follow him across the water in her canoe—that she would jump over the precipice before the castle and kill herself. When satisfied that all this was of no avail, that he would go in spite of her half-savage protestations, the young savage crouched down at his feet, and grew sullen, as if meditating some wild scheme in her mind.

Frontenac was greatly agitated. He loved the wild thing, and would gladly have saved her from pain.

“I shall come back next year,” he said, “with—with—”

He faltered, and broke off with a half-smile. Katharine locked up:

“With what?” she demanded, sharply.

“With some one who will make you wise and good.”

The child's eyes burned fiercely. She crept away from his feet, and moving to a distance, watched him with vigilant suspicion.

“Katharine will be a good girl, and obey her governess she will study and grow wise. Then I will bring her a beautiful necklace,” said the Governor, holding out his hands to win her back.

The girl crept toward him again.

“Yes,” she said, “bring bright stones. I will wear them here, and here, and here.”



She touched her forehead, her bosom and her arras, while her great Indian eyes flashed with the idea of these glittering ornaments. Frontenac sighed, shook his head, and kissed her haughty young face.

The next day he was gone. One hour after the man-of-war which bore him from the city had passed out of sight Katharine had eluded her governess, and stood upon a pier down in the lower town. A canoe shot in from the river rowed by the old Indian woman. Before it reached the pier, and when it still rocked in the water, the young truant sprung into it, and sending back a defiant laugh, shot down the river.

It was in vain the Governor had provided protection for his child. In spite of every thing she spent half her time on Orleans Island with her old grandame, but would return to the castle, from time to time, with audacious composure, still defying all control and obeying no one.

Sometimes the old woman came to the castle, but it was always with cat-like secrecy, and she seldom ventured beyond the sylvan chamber which Katharine occupied as her mother had done. During the winter, when the waterfall was frozen and the forests were white with snow, the old woman disappeared for a time, but, when the leaves were green, she came back again.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### AIMO'S INCANTATION.

It was in the autumn of the second year after Frontenac's departure for France, that orders came to have the Gubernatorial place put in order for his reception. Quantities of new and most splendid furniture had been sent out from Paris additional rooms were thrown open, and sumptuously decorated, conjecture was active for a time in accounting for these things; then it was known throughout the whole province that Count Frontenac, Governor of Canada, was married.

After a time the castle was made ready, and its inmates waited with impatient curiosity for the coming of its master.



The ground, as well as the interior, had been greatly improved. Flowering shrubs and leafy young trees filled the terraces, either planted in the soil or thriving in huge vases and ornamental tubs. Altogether the place had taken a more beautiful and imposing appearance. Many a palace of the old world was inferior to it in comfort and imposing splendor.

Late in autumn, a glorious yellow sunshine was sending its radiance through thickets of foreign plants that turned the terrace into a fragment of Paradise. Above this spot, in a small chamber on one of the upper floors, was seated a young girl, looking out over the city, and resting her eyes upon the broad forest that closed in the distance. A girl of wild, singular aspect, whose lineage it would have been almost impossible to decide without a long and earnest scrutiny of her face.

The complexion was dark, but singularly clear, without the slightest tinge of red to color its smoothness; the nose and lips were as delicately modeled as those of a Greek statue, while from under the low, broad forehead, with its straight black brows, looked out a pair of eyes that, in all Canada, had not their match for brilliancy and splendor. Strange eyes that stared the beholder through and through, but told few secrets of their own, though one felt instinctively the terrible power they must have when fired by anger, or the delicious softness that could subdue them if any gentler feelings were stirred within.

As the girl sat crouched in the broad window-seat, she had unconsciously assumed a position that had all the grace of a wild animal. There was something in the curve of the neck, and the careless drooping of the relaxed limbs, which would have reminded a thoughtful person of some forest creature who had been confined there, but, though a prisoner, could not be subdued.

The dress she wore was as singular as her personal appearance. A robe of some dark crimson stuff, made in an obsolete French style, but trimmed with furs, after the fashion of the Indians, revealed the lithe proportions of her form, and suited admirably with her peculiar face. Her long, black hair was braided about her head in a profusion of slender bands, and to please some fancy of the moment, she had twisted a coronal of flame-colored feathers among them, that lighted up the



raven masses with new brilliancy. I say that it would at first have puzzled any one to guess her parentage, but a closer observation showed a peculiarity in the clear complexion, and a contracted, sometimes serpent-like look about the eyes, in spite of their beauty, which proved that some darker than European mingled with the white blood in her veins.

She had been sitting alone there for hours—doing nothing—with not even the fanciful embroidery in which all women of that time excelled, near her—hardly once wavering in that direct, steady gaze, looking out upon the dun forest in the distance with a changeless expression which it would have puzzled a physiognomist to translate.

There came a knock at the door at last. The girl started to her feet, paused an instant, then crossed the floor with a rapid step. That tread revealed her blood at once—she walked like a panther—nobody but an Indian ever had that lithe, springy tread.

She opened the door carefully—not that there was the slightest reason for it, but caution and craft were so much a portion of her nature, that she only obeyed her strongest instincts in that movement, slight as it was—and looked out into the corridor.

Ahmo, the old Indian woman, was standing there in the shadow. With a low obeisance, and a welcome in her soft yet deep-toned dialect, the girl stepped aside, and held the door open for her to enter.

The woman passed into the chamber, and when the light struck full upon her, you saw, by the wrinkled face, dark and withered as a frosted plum, and the snowy hair folded carelessly back from it, how aged she had become since the day we left her flying from her daughter's grave; but her form was still erect, and she moved almost as lightly and noiselessly across the stone floor as the girl herself.

She cast one contemptuous glance about the apartment, as if in scorn of the civilized comforts introduced there, although it was sparsely provided, and would have looked bare and naked, had it not been for the couch of rich fur that gave it savage individuality.

She seated herself upon a pile of cushions which had been arranged near one of the narrow windows, while the girl



closed the door with the same cautious manner which had marked her movements, and drew close to her side.

They would have made a striking picture, that pair grouped together among the struggling sunlight and shadows in the old room.

In spite of the woman's age and the clear complexion which the girl had inherited from her white father, there was a peculiar resemblance between them. The strange light in the girl's eyes found its reply in the deepened flame which a life of vindictive passions had given to the old squaw's. Her fallen mouth shut together like a vice, but you could see that it had once possessed something of the delicacy and grace which made that of her companion so beautiful, and the resemblance was carried into every attitude and turn of the head, until there was something revolting in it from the contrast between that withered, wicked face, and the countenance full of youthful passion and fire, which stood looking down upon her.

"Mahaska wonders what brings me into the settlement to-day," said the old woman, after a short silence, and speaking in her native tongue.

"I thought the chief's widow would not pass the Governor's threshold so soon," replied the girl, in the same dialect.

"There was not time to send for you," returned the old woman; "I had business in the settlement, and came to you with news which would not bear to wait."

The girl bowed her head and waited; it was not her place to question—when her grandame saw fit, she would disclose her errand.

"They refused me admittance," continued she, in a tone of suppressed rage; "but neither bolts nor bars could keep Ahmo from her grandchild, when she had need to see her."

"Who did this?" asked the girl, shutting her lips hard together; "which one of them was it?"

"The tall man with the fool's dress," replied the woman, "but Ahmo knew whose orders he obeyed. The Governor hates the old Indian woman—he has reason—men always hate those whom they have wronged."

The girl looked troubled; there was still a wealth of natural love in her heart, stronger and more intense from the fact that she had so few upon whom to lavish it.



"He is Mahaska's father," she said, softly.

The old woman made a quick gesture.

"Which does Mahaska love best, her white blood or the red stream that flowed in the veins of great chiefs? The whites call her Katharine, and would make her a toy or plaything, shallow and idle as themselves; but the Indian name given to her by her grandame has a deeper meaning."

"I hate the white men, you know it," returned the girl with sudden passion, "but Mahaska's father is kind and good,—she loves him."

The old squaw knotted her fingers hard together under her blanket, and waited a moment to restrain the cold fury which gleamed in her eyes, before she made answer.

"Has Mahaska been pining for his return?" she asked, almost in a whisper. "Has she counted each day as the leaves turned red, and thought that each one would bring him?"

"Mahaska's heart has followed him across the great water as a bird flies after its young," she answered.

"If Mahaska has a heart that can love so deeply, she can hate also," hissed the squaw.

"All but him," she replied.

"Does Mahaska remember her mother?" she whispered.

The girl started, as if the question had struck some hidden wound close to her heart.

"Ahmo knows that Mahaska has not forgotten," she answered, mournfully. "Why does she hurt her grandchild with questions sharp as the chief's arrow?"

"Because the time has come for Mahaska to learn wisdom," said the woman, in the same chill whisper. "Mahaska has been a child long enough; she must learn her name aright now."

"What does it mean?" asked the girl. "When Mahaska goes among the chiefs, they call her the Swaying Reed; the Governor says Katharine softly, as if the south wind had spoken it; but Ahmo calls her child by a name that she does not understand."

"It means the Avenger!" said the squaw, with a sort of fierce exultation that she could not restrain.

The girl did not start at that ominous word; her breath



came quickly, but she remained motionless under the keen glance which the woman bent on her from under her gray eyebrows.

"Mahaska is not afraid?" she asked; "the white blood in her veins does not curdle at that name?"

The girl lifted her head proudly.

"Mahaska fears nothing—not even the thunder tempests which the Manitou sends when he is angry."

The old woman looked at her with a ferocious affection that had something terrible in it.

"The blood of the great chief is strong in her heart as the fire-water of the white man," she muttered; "Ahmo has not cradled a fawn in the panther's lair."

"Why did Ahmo give me this name?" asked the girl. "My mother called me her Cherry Blossom, for she said the trees were white with them when I was born; but that day when we went to the Island where she died, she had no longer pleasant names for Mahaska, but held her fast to her heart with great sobs that would have turned to tears in a white woman's heart."

The old woman writhed under these words with sudden pain, but she bore the terrible recollections thus called up with savage firmness; not an eyelash quivered; not a tear softened the hard glitter in her eyes.

"The trees have blossomed twice since then," she answered, slowly. "Mahaska is now almost a woman; she had counted twelve birthdays when her mother died."

The old woman bowed her head and was silent for a few moments; then she went on slowly, like one recalling dead memories, which no power could bury and lay at rest.

"Ahmo remembers when the White Fawn was bright and young as Mahaska is now—when no girl of her tribe was so fleet of foot; and when she laughed, the birds of the forest were put to shame. Not a young chief but would have spread the choicest furs for her in his wigwam if she would have shared it, but the White Fawn saw the stranger and followed him. The pale-face's love is death to the Indian."

Mahaska shuddered, but drew herself proudly up as if she would have defended the father she loved even at the risk of



her grandmother's anger. The old woman checked the words upon her lips with a gesture of command.

"Let Mahaska be silent; she will speak folly like the pale-faces. Let her listen, and when she has heard, the white blood in her veins will all burn out in the fire of her anger. She will be an Indian then—Ahmo can trust her child."

It required all the girl's wonderful self-control to force herself into silence; but, at the squaw's bidding, she sunk upon the cushions at her feet, and sat with her face a little turned away.

"Does Mahaska know that the Governor returns to-night?" she asked.

The girl would have started to her feet, but the old woman placed one hand upon her arm with a grasp like iron.

"Mahaska is not a puppet like the wooden things the white chief used to give her," she said, with bitter scorn. "Can she not listen and be still?"

The girl crouched lower in her seat, but her dusky face lit up with a bright glow, and her great eyes took their softest look, adding tenfold beauty to her countenance.

"The Governor-chief is not coming alone," she continued, watching her grandchild eagerly, to mark the effect of her words. "A pale-faced woman and a young girl are with him; they come from over the seas; they will take Mahaska's place here; the white chief will have no love to give her now."

The girl stared at her with incredulous astonishment; all her respect and awe of her grandmother could not keep back the smile of unbelief that dimpled her mouth.

"Mahaska is like a young bird learning to fly," said the old woman, sternly; "she is wiser than those who have taught her all she knows."

"The white chief has been kind to Mahaska," she answered, proudly; "he will not put her out of his heart. Mahaska would freeze in the cold, and he knows it."

"Would she sit down and weep like a pale-faced squaw?" asked the woman, angrily, but with a wild anxiety in her face. "Would she pine herself to death like a young fawn, while those who had driven her out of the white chief's heart took her place and grew like flowers in the sunshine?"



The girl shuddered in every limb, but did not speak.

"Mahaska is a coward," continued the squaw; "the red blood in her heart is weak as water; she has no courage; she would die, and the pale-face girl would sit on her grave."

All the softness and trouble left Katharine's face; the Indian blood surged into her face like a dusky shadow. She leaned forward and clutched the old woman's hands in a grasp that must have been painful, though the squaw only smiled in triumph.

"She would come to Ahmo; the pale-face should not see her die."

It was painful to see that look in one so young; to hear the dreadful feeling in her almost whispered tones.

The old woman released her hands from that hard grasp, and leaned back against her cushions.

"Mahaska will soon know if Ahmo speaks truth," she said, slowly; "the pale women are coming."

"Who is coming?" demanded Katharine. "What does Ahmo mean? She speaks riddles, like a medicine-man."

"The white Governor will be here by the time the sun is hid in the forest," replied Ahmo. "He brings a pale-face to share his great wigwam, and a young girl like Mahaska, whom he tends as if she were a strange bird. Does Ahmo speak plain enough? Can Mahaska understand now?"

Still she preserved a semblance of composure, and her voice was tolerably firm as she asked:

"How does Ahmo know this? The Governor's men have not spoken of his return."

"Let Mahaska ask them; they have been warned, but Ahmo has tidings of all the white chief does. A swift runner of the tribe had told her of the white Governor's marriage before the men in the great lodge knew it."

Under the glare of the old woman's eyes the girl did not dare give way, but the convulsed face and knotted hands told of an agony worse than death—a struggle in which every better and gentle feeling might desert that passionate heart, leaving it a desert, in which the poisonous counsels of her grand mother would take deep root.

"Is Mahaska satisfied? Does she believe?"



"Ahmo can not lie," she answered. "Mahaska knows that the white Governor is coming, as she said."

"And will she bear this?" demanded the old woman, with a return of that ferocity which had made her features so repulsive a few moments before. "Will she crouch down like a whipped dog and take the bone her father flings her after the pale-face is satisfied?"

"Mahaska has learned her name," replied the girl, from between her clenched teeth; "she is the Avenger!"

"But she does not yet know the half," exclaimed the squaw; "she has to hear how her mother died; she has not learned to hate, yet."

"Tell me," she pleaded; "Mahaska's heart is strong—Ahmo's words have put fire in it."

"Let her come to the forest to-night," said the woman. "Ahmo can not tell her here; by her mother's grave she shall have the truth. Mahaska will be all Indian after that."

"The white blood is burning out already," hissed the girl. "Ahmo's words have kindled a flame that will not leave a drop to chill her heart."

The old woman lifted her hands toward her grandchild, and muttered a charm, while Katharine crouched in silence under the words which she could not catch, but which thrilled her with passionate awe, from the wild frenzy with which they were uttered.

When the invocation was ended, the old woman rose and prepared to leave the room.

"Mahaska will not forget? To-night she will come to the forest?"

The girl had fallen down upon the soft cushions, and her face was hidden from view, but she made a gesture of assent.

"Mahaska is the grandchild of Nemono, the great chief," pursued the woman. "He is watching her from the happy anointing-grounds; the shade of her mother is calling to her for vengeance. Will she not listen? Let her heart be strong she is the last of Ahmo's children, she will not blast her old ones by withering under them?"

The girl rose and stood before her, giving back glance for



giance, till the old woman smiled grimly at the demoniac splendor of her eyes.

"Let Ahmo go back to her lodge," she said. "When the night is dark, Mahaska will be there."

Without further words, or even a gesture of farewell, the old squaw glided out of the room noiselessly as she entered it, and Katharine was so lost in the tumultuous thoughts seething in her breast, that she did not even hear the ponderous door close as it creaked beneath her grandmother's hand.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### THE NEW WIFE AND NEW LIFE.

A LONG train was proceeding slowly through the dense forest below Quebec. The number of armed men that guarded it proved that it was no ordinary traveling party. Near the front eight stalwart savages were carrying a litter, in which were seated a lady and a young girl. The elegance of their costume, and the refinement and delicacy of their faces, were in singular contrast to their surroundings. It was evident that even the Indians were struck by it, in spite of their dogged unconcern, for one could see their eyes wandering toward the litter, with the wonder with which they might have surveyed two rare exotics had they suddenly blossomed in the midst of the hardy wild-flowers, that made the forest so beautiful in the spring-time.

By the side of the litter rode the Governor of the Canadas. His handsome face, usually so calm and proud in its expression, was so softened when he looked at the lady, that those who had seen him only in his hours of business and command would hardly have recognized him.

Frontenac and his party had become so weary of the ship, that had toiled with them week after week across the Atlantic, that they had been put ashore on the river, and were making their way to Quebec along an Indian trail through the woods, on its bank. The day's journey had been a



toilsome one through an unbroken forest, just putting forth its earliest spring buds and blossoms, and over a path where a horse less carefully trained than that the Governor rode, or less used to such a broken path, would have found difficulty in keeping his footing. A woman so delicately nurtured as that lady had been would have given way completely under the fatigue, had not it been for the strong love of all that was beautiful in nature, which kept her imagination too vividly occupied for any thought of the weariness that really possessed her. For this poetic element in a true womanly nature can supply the place of strength.

It was a lovely face, although it had lost the first bloom of youth, and the traces of past suffering were visible in the sadness which had become habitual to the large blue eyes. It was beautiful to see how the pale face brightened, and the sweet mouth kindled into smiles whenever that haughty man bent toward her. His face was like that of a man who had found the great wish of a lifetime. If her hand but chanced to touch his, or the wind blew her long veil against his cheek, he fairly trembled with happiness, and his eyes kept wandering toward her as if his whole being was so completely centered in her presence that he could not look away.

They had been almost silent for the last hour—probably each was filled with the same thoughts as they approached the place where he was soon to make her a home. You could see in her eyes the delicious tremor that the reflection sent through her heart, and the ecstatic happiness which made the strong man tremble through every fiber of his frame was plainly visible, in spite of his self-control and the long years of endurance which had taught him such stern lessons.

The young girl kept this silent happiness from utter self-concentration. She was chattering like a young bird, so full of smiles and glee that not one of those rude men who guarded the cavalcade could look upon her without the stern visages relaxing, and the harsh voices softening even more than respect for their stately Governor would have caused them to do.

She could not have been more than thirteen, but the face had all the innocence and that peculiarly childlike expression



which most girls of that age have lost ; but her form looked even older, tall and slender, and early developed under the skies of southern France.

She looked like a brilliant portrait of what her mother had been : the same beautiful auburn hair, with a tinge of gold whenever it caught the light ; the same clear blue eyes, without having yet caught a tinge of sadness, and a mouth that broke into pretty dimples with every word she spoke.

" Papa ! papa !" she called, eagerly, when he did not hear some question she had asked. " Are you dreaming ?"

He turned toward her with a smile that brightened his face like a sudden gleam of sunshine.

" Sometimes I almost think I must be," he answered ; and his eyes wandered toward his wife with an expression she fully understood. " I have so often made this journey with no company but my servants and my Indian guides, that it seems like a dream to see these sweet faces by my side."

" A dream from which you will not have to awake," cried the young girl. " Oh ! isn't that delightful ? I've often wished dreams could last."

" I mean your life to be something better than that," he answered, fondly.

" *Oher papa !*" she exclaimed, her sensitive nature so easily moved that the tears rose like dewdrops to her violet eyes. " Oh, mamma, how did I get along without this dear, new papa ?"

They smiled tenderly upon her, that long-divided pair, and the proud man did not strive to keep back the words of affection which rose so naturally to his lips.

" I like having these Indians carry my litter," exclaimed the girl ; " they can't understand our French, and we can talk as much as we like."

" Yet, you were horribly afraid of them when we first set out," said her mother.

" Yes, indeed, Adèle," continued the Governor, smiling. " I think if you had not been afraid of being laughed at you would have cried outright."

" I was so hurried in starting that I don't remember anything about it," she replied, archly. " Now, just hear me talk Indian ;" and she rattled off four or five words that the



Governor had taught, with true French volubility, and a softness and grace that made even the savage she addressed—who, before, had been stalking on with the gravity of a bronze statue endowed with powers of motion—soften into the nearest approach to a smile that his grim features could produce.

He said a few words to his nearest companion which the Governor caught.

“What do you think he says, Adèle?” said he. “That you are as frisky as that rabbit you wanted him to catch this morning.”

Adèle laughed gayly, and nodded at the savage with her pretty spoiled princess air, and ran off upon some other subject with the same ease and lightness.

So they traveled on through heavy pines and budding oaks. The litter was sometimes brushed by forest-boughs, on which the tender leaf-buds hung like jewels, and the hoofs of Frontenac’s horse were often buried in wood moss that yielded to them like velvet. It was beautiful to witness the animation of that man. His life in Canada, hitherto so dreary in its grandeur, was now to be brightened by love. He had left his command sadly enough. He was returning now, happy at last. The girl, Adèle, had already become to him like his own child, and so the two, husband and wife, set out upon their journey, happier in that far-off wilderness than they had ever been in the stately homes they had deserted in the old world.

The day was slowly fading—the rich coloring of the sunset brightened the forest and cast a warm glow upon those long-tried hearts.

“This is a good omen,” said the Governor, turning toward his wife.

“Are we near the end of our journey?” the girl asked.

“When we reach the top of a hill half a mile from here you will see the castle, *ma petite*,” he answered.

She gave a cry of impatient joy.

“I was beginning to think it was like an enchanted city,” she said, “and flew away faster than we could follow.”

“Has the journey seemed long to you?” asked Frontenac, turning to his wife.



"I could almost wish that it might never end," she replied, in a tone of suppressed emotion. "Oh, Charles, the days spent in this dark forest have been the happiest of my life. We have been so blest here; who can tell what may await us when we pass beyond these woods."

"Your happiness is in my hands now," he said; "I have no longer any fear for you or for myself."

She raised her eyes to his face with a look of trusting love that no after years of suffering could ever efface from his memory.

Adèle had turned away with that rare delicacy and tact which had characterized her from childhood. She felt that it was a moment when even she had no right to remind them of her presence even by a single word.

The girl's love for her new parent already was near to idol-ity. His tenderness and affection were so different from the cold stateliness she could remember in her real parent, who had scarcely noticed her from her birth in his disappointment at her not having been a son, that she seemed unable to give enough of gratitude and love in return for the fondness so lavishly bestowed upon her now.

They reached the height of which he had spoken, and by the aid of his pocket glass, could clearly make out the castle of Quebec, on its towering precipice of rocks.

"It looks like Europe!" Adèle exclaimed, clasping her hands in ecstasy. "Oh, mamma, we shall be so happy there."

"If it lies in human power to make you so," exclaimed the Governor.

Madame Frontenac was silent for several moments. She could not trust her voice in that first whirl of emotion.

"I have a home at last," she murmured, "*at last!*"

He caught the words, bent toward her and whispered as he laid a hand upon his heart:

"Dearest, your home is here; no trouble can reach you now—I have sworn it!"

Ah, it was almost worth suffering all they had of suspense and pain, to find that perfect repose and happiness at last—happiness such as seldom is granted to mortals, even for a short season, and only then after years of trial and endurance in which there is no ray to lighten the blackness, no warm



breeze to fan the heart with momentary outgushes of hope.

"We shall be there by nightfall," he said, after a pause. "The distance is not great, and the road from here is direct, though a little rough. When spring comes, I shall have it improved, for we shall wish to make frequent excursions into the forest."

"I mean to have a lodge here, and be an Indian princess," cried Adèle. "You and mamma can come to visit me."

"You will have vassals enough, I can answer for that," said the Governor, gayly. "All who come within the spell of those eyes must yield at once, and we have some gay young fellows at Quebec."

"Ah, Charles, you will spoil the child!" said his wife, smiling gently.

"I am sure it is very pleasant to be spoiled," said Adèle, kissing her repeatedly; "don't you find it so, *petite mamma*?"

They all laughed at that, and the two elders grew almost as gay as the child herself under the influence of her winning ways and high spirits.

"Sing to us, little one," the Governor said, when the gathering twilight brought that silence which is so poetical and impressive.

Adèle complied at once. She broke into a sweet French romance that the Governor loved for the sake of the memories it brought, and soon her mother's voice joined with hers, and rung far out upon the still air, making their savage guides feel almost as if they carried some superhuman load.

While they sung, passing through a long, narrow defile, a covert of bushes parted, and a woman's face looked out after them, black and terrible as that of a fiend.

"Sing on, sing on; Ahmo listens," she muttered; "this is your hour; the next will be hers."

She watched the train slowly disappear, then the bushes swept together again, and with a gesture of menace, the Indian woman disappeared in the depths of the forest. On swept the cavalcade; the forest was past—the rush of the river came distinctly upon the freshened air—the long line of water shone like mist in the gray of the twilight.

"Here at last!" exclaimed the Governor. "Look up, little



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wife. No more tears, no more wandering. *This is your home.*"

Frontenac entered the town; swift runners had heralded his approach. On through the narrow streets, crowded with people come out to do honor to their favorite Governor and his new wife. The cannon pealed joyful welcome from the hill, while the stately old castle was lighted up till its gray walls seemed alive with flame. On swept the long train. They reached the outer gates—they passed into the inner court-yard, and, so dizzy with joyful emotion that she could hardly see, the countess felt her husband draw her close to his side, guarding her swiftly through the eager crowds with their heartfelt welcomes, into the privacy of the mansion where she was henceforth to reign as mistress.

Out boomed the cannon again, mingled with the peal of bells and shouts of the people; and now the lady roused herself to a consciousness of her happiness. She was full of womanly pride at the honor bestowed upon her husband, and knew of a certainty that she had indeed thrown off the old life as completely as if whole worlds swept between her and it, instead of the broad ocean which had borne her to that new existence.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE LIONESS AND HER CUB.

FROM the window of the chamber where we left her, Katharine, roused by the cannon and the tumult, watched that train wind up the hill and enter the court-yard of the castle.

She leaned far out of the casement to obtain a better view. She saw her father—a sudden light from the torches fell full upon the faces of the lady and the young girl. It seemed as if the burning eyes bent upon them must have made their influence felt even at that distance.

They passed on out of sight, then she fell back into her seat, cowering down in the gloom, and giving herself wholly up to the demons which tormented her.



No human being had ever possessed the slightest conception of the girl's character—traced in words it would sound wild and unnatural, were it not that her name, years after, was written in such letters of blood in our country's history that the story we have to tell will not appear improbable as connected with her, even in this her tender girlhood.

The creature's intellect was wonderful; even at that age undeveloped as it was, she had met no one capable of fathoming its depths; and when we join to that the ferocity of her Indian blood, the unscrupulous teachings of the old grandmother, whose hatred of the whites was almost her whole religion, we have a character which stands alone in history, and from which a woman shrinks back appalled, when she remembers that this wicked nature belonged to one of her own sex.

Young as she was, a love of power was one of the ruling passions in this girl's nature; never a tyrant of old thirsted for it more ardently, or would have employed it more unscrupulously and tyrannically.

In the ignorance in which she still lived she had believed in her dreams that she should succeed her father in his power. This really was a fixed thought in her mind; consequently her rage was yet greater when she found that another was coming who might usurp her place.

The evening passed on, and in the darkness of her room Katharine crouched down in corners, panting with anger as she listened to the tumult and joyous bustle that went on below.

The immediate circle of men about the Governor, many of them residents at the castle—educated men of noble families who had been attracted thither by a desire to achieve reputation or wealth, young officers, and all the crowd of gay people who collect about such a man—were thronging the great saloons to do honor to the new lady of the mansion. Katharine heard gleeful music and laughter, and every sound sent a spasm of rage over her that might well have terrified the beholder.

The broad moon looked coldly in at the casement; it seemed to fall around her in that terrible passion with a cold surprise; but when she looked up and saw it, she checked



the paroxysm that had been upon her, and recollecting her tryst with her grandmother, prepared to go into the night.

She knew every passage and turning in the old castle as well as she knew the forest about her grandmother's lodge—dark staircases, narrow openings, that would have astonished old servants who had lived there for years had they discovered their existence.

She found no difficulty in reaching the ground-floor unperceived, crept out into the court-yard, and, in the midst of the confusion, succeeded in gaining the open space outside of the walls without being challenged by the sentinel.

She had all the craft of her Indian race. She could spring like a panther, and had a force and agility in her slender frame that was positively startling. She could stand upon the ground and catch the limbs of a tree by a sudden clasp, and swing herself up among them without the slightest difficulty. There was not a cascade she had not explored, no steep so dangerous, or ravine so deep, that she had not penetrated its darkest recesses.

Through the narrow streets of the lower town she took her way for a considerable distance, then found means of escaping beyond its limits by some mysterious way, of which she, perhaps, alone had the clue, and with the speed of a deer set out for the forest. On its verge she found an empty canoe. Springing into it, she flashed down the river like a wildwood dream. She landed on the island at a point opposite the lodge, and made her way toward it.

She would have looked fairly like a spirit to any one meeting her in that swift flight. On she flew, turning the tangled paths of the forest without the slightest fear, never once hesitating, sure-footed and agile, until on the verge of the grand old woods she came upon her grandmother's lodge.

The place looked picturesque and beautiful in the moonlight. At another time Katharine would have paused to admire it, for she had a certain appreciation of every thing that was lovely in nature; then she was too much preoccupied to think of any thing outside of her errand and the deadly hate which had suddenly thrust itself in upon her heart.

The lodge was built of logs, made sufficiently warm and comfortable to be endurable to the hardy Indian woman, even



in the depths of a Canadian winter. Wild vines, just covered with red buds, grew in rank luxuriance over it, concealing the half-hewn logs, and investing it, even in their almost leafless state, with a picturesque grace. Primeval trees bent down their branches over it, making a pleasant music in the moonlight, and through the stillness came up distinctly the rush of the great waterfall, which mingled like a refrain with the voice of the pines.

Katharine paused near the entrance, and gave the signal by which she always warned her grandmother of her approach. Even she, bold and daring as she was, would not have ventured to intrude upon Ahmo without that warning. It sounded as if a whippowil was giving utterance to his melancholy complaint. She repeated the note, then the heavy skins hung before the door of the lodge were thrown hastily back, and the old Indian woman, more weird and witch-like than ever, appeared in the dark aperture, with the moonlight playing about her wrinkled face and snowy hair.

"Who summons Ahmo? Is it her grandchild? Let the maiden approach."

Mahaska came forward, and the woman drew her into the lodge, sweeping the skins down again over the doorway.

The room was airy and comfortable. The walls were hung with furs, the floor was spread with fresh branches of spruce and balsam, that gave a pleasant aromatic odor to the whole apartment. Bear-skins were scattered here and there, to serve as seats, and every comfort which her Indian nature could require had been gathered about the old woman.

A fire was burning at one end of the lodge, and the uncertain glare it cast through the room was the only illumination the old woman had kindled. It lighted up the dark shadows, fell about the form of the woman and girl, as they crouched near it, and struck upon an array of terrible mementos that the squaw had hung upon the opposite wall—her husband's tomahawk and war-club, and a long string of human scalps, that fluttered in every breeze, striking together with a noise that was sickening to hear.

"Mahaska has kept her word," the woman said. "She is wise; she is not fickle and idle-tongued, like the pale-faces."



"There will not be a drop of white blood left in Mahaska's heart before another moon has gone," returned Katharine, in the Indian tongue, which she spoke with the same ease that she did her father's language.

The old woman nodded triumphantly at her words and the savage tone in which they were spoken.

"Ahmo was not mistaken," she said; "the pale face squaws have come into the white chief's lodge."

"He did not send for me to-night. He had eyes and ears only for the two pale-faces, with hair like sunbeams, and eyes like violets in a brook. He forgot Mahaska when these women looked into his eyes, yet she is his own child," Katharine burst forth with fierce energy, for her heart was wounded in its love, and the woman's words aroused more fiercely the storm in her bosom. "I waited—waited—no message. I was forgotten."

"Mahaska has lost her place in the white chief's heart. The pale-faces have stolen her nest."

The girl's hand settled upon the hilt of a slender dagger that she always wore about her dress—a pretty, fanciful thing that she had long before begged of her father, and which he took from his writing-table and gave her, with a laugh at her strange whim—and her eyes took the dangerous, serpent look they had when her passions were at their height.

"What will Mahaska do?" persisted the woman. "Let her tell the chief's widow what her plans are."

Katharine shook her head.

"I can not think," she said, mournfully, even in the midst of her rage. "Mahaska's heart is heavy."

"Let the maiden remember her name—the Avenger. She has nothing to do with tears, like a weak pale-face."

Katharine threw off the melancholy feelings which had stolen over her as she remembered that almost the sole object she had had to love was lost to her. She drew herself up, and flung her head fiercely back, looking full in the old woman's face with a sternness equal to her own.

"I came to hear why Ahmo gave me that name," she said. "Will she speak?"

"Let Mahaska reflect. Unless her heart is strong to hate, and her hand to work, she had better not hear."



"Mahaska is not a child," returned the girl, impatiently. "Her heart has grown old and hard since the sun set."

The old woman was watching her all the time. Again she nodded with satisfaction as she looked at the girl's pallid and working features.

"Ahmo had once a child," she began, abruptly, "beautiful as the cherry blossoms in May, graceful as a young fawn. That child met the white man, and after that neither mother nor race were any thing to her. Ahmo had no choice. The white chief was strong. She yielded, but she hated the whites more fiercely from that time. She gave her child to the white chief, and he took her away to a new lodge, and then Ahmo found that, according to the laws of the whites, she had no rightful place in his wigwam; but she did not heed that; her own lips had spoken the marriage spell, and if he wronged her, Ahmo's hand was not too weak to avenge her child. A blossom budded in the heart of Ahmo's child, and the old woman grew young and strong when she first met the look of Mahaska's eyes. When the White Fawn left her lodge, and came to Ahmo, it was only to die. Her voice was sad as the night-wind, but she clung to her chief still, like a vine that can not be uprooted without striking death to its heart."

Ahmo paused an instant, but Katharine motioned her to go on, holding her very breath to catch her words.

"Ahmo took Chileli in her arms, and carried her away from the white man's lodge, and she went back no more. The white chief had dealt a blow at her heart. A pale-face across the seas had his love; he cared nothing for the White Fawn. She came here, withering slowly, like a wild rose that the frost has touched. Then Ahmo remembered all her wrongs, and why she had given the child her name, Mahaska, the Avenger. Does she understand its meaning now?"

The girl's quick comprehension drank in her full words at once. She was leaning eagerly forward, motioning her again to continue.

"Before a moon had passed by, and Ahmo's daughter was in the land of the spirits, she took Mahaska by the hand, and led her to the white chief's lodge. He was kind, and spoke softly to the maiden, but he drove Ahmo away. Now he has forgotten the love that made Mahaska's life pleasant—he has



taken the young pale-face for his daughter. The white men will point their fingers at Mahaska; they say she has no name. Her father has petted her as a young panther that he took from the woods—when she shows her teeth he will fling her away. The pale-faced squaws will call her bad names; their tongues have many biting words.”

All the while she was watching carefully the effect of her words, though she kept her head partly turned away, and seemed to be looking into the fire.

“The white chief gave Mahaska’s mother a black poison to kill her, that he might go across the great waters. Had it not been for the pale-faced squaw he would not have done it. Her child comes to take the place that should be Mahaska’s. She will have power and gold. Let Mahaska offend her, and she will be driven out a beggar. What will Mahaska do? Ahmo waits to hear.”

“Let Ahmo give her grandchild counsel; she is very wise, and Mahaska will obey her words.”

“What does Mahaska’s heart say?”

“The spirit of her mother has whispered to Mahaska. She can not be at rest in the happy hunting-ground until the blood of the pale-face woman has been offered as a sacrifice.”

“Mahaska has heard,” cried Ahmo, full of triumph.

Her eyes gleamed balefully in the dim light, and were answered by a look of troubled uncertainty in Mahaska’s eyes. The old squaw rose slowly from the ground, moved across the room to an obscure corner, threw back a pile of skins, and pushing away the fir branches, disclosed a broad, flat stone; she raised this slowly, took from under it a small reed, fashioned into a sort of vial, and returned with it in her hand, after replacing every thing as it was before.

She held it up before Katharine with a look that explained her intentions to the girl as clearly as if she had put her thought in words.

“Can Mahaska be cautious?” she whispered. “She must mix this with the pale-face’s drink. She will sleep soundly after it; no kiss from the white chief can wake her.”

Katharine seized the reed and hid it in her bosom; then she rose and stood opposite the woman.

“When will Mahaska empty the reed?” Ahmo asked.



"The squaw shall not keep the place of Mahaska's mother even for an hour," whispered the girl.

The young creature trembled fearfully as she spoke, but some good was in her soul, in spite of the evil woman. She took the reed out, and held it with a sort of terror, as if a serpent had been given her to keep.

"And the young maiden?" she said.

"Let her live. Her cries will be music to Mahaska's ears. The White Fawn will hear them in the happy hunting-ground and be at rest. The maiden shall live."

There was a hoarse rattle in the woman's throat, but she did not speak; she stood silently watching the girl as she drew her mantle about her and prepared to depart. Neither spoke again; a long glance was exchanged, then Katharine darted forward, threw back the skins from the doorway, and hurried out into the forest.

The old woman crouched over the failing fire, sleepless, watchful, listening to each sound—still and mute as a wild beast waiting in its lair for the approach of prey. But after a little time there came a quick sound in the bushes; the skin was put aside, and the young girl stood in the moonlight that streamed through the opening.

"Mahaska has been out on the waters, and she saw them full of stars that whispered to her. She has listened to the wind; her mother's voice was there, but it came with a breath from the flowers. She looked in the moonlight, and saw in its whiteness a floating cloud, and knew that her mother was there. The water was bright, the wind was sweet, the moonlight was still. Mahaska's heart would have been glad but for the poison reed in her bosom. She took it out, and broke it, letting the black drops fall from its hollow into the river. Then her heart grew light, and she felt like a bird with its wings untied. Chileli's voice, as it spoke through the wind, the silver cloud, and the stars deep down in the water, called her child Katharine. She is not yet the Avenger. When Chileli wants vengeance she will cry aloud, and the cry will be, 'Mahaska! *Mahaska!* Then her child will listen.'"

Almo arose, smothering the fierce disappointment that smote to the depths of her savage heart. She saw that the girl, with all her wild tempest of passion, could not be forced



to murder any thing that her father loved, at least not yet; so she laid her hand on the young head, and gave it something like a caress.

"It is well," she said. "When the time comes, Mahaska will hear her mother's voice speak loud."

"Katharine heard it to-night when the winds sighed."

"No, no; that voice was a lie. Some pale-face spirit spoke it to save the white chief from Mahaska's vengeance."

"Give me another reed," said Mahaska.

Ahmo took another reed from its hiding-place, whose pith was replaced by poison, and gave it to the girl.

Katharine placed it in her bosom, and went down to her canoe in silence.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### EVIL CONQUERED.

KATHARINE entered her lonely room. A wild tumult disturbed all her being. Where must she go—what should she do? Adverse passions struggled in her bosom: deep, impetuous love for her father, faith in his goodness, homage for his greatness, and the stern whisper of revenge that haunted her soul like the urging of a fiend.

"But he loves me no longer. I am alone, alone—poor Indian, rejected of all."

The thought stung her with fresh grief, and more fiery anger. She started up and went to the door, paused there, and stole back again with tears in her eyes.

"He may come yet. It is not midnight. He may think of poor Katharine in spite of these pale-faced women."

Even to her room the noise of festivities reached. A band of music sounded loud and clear from the esplanade. The hum of voices, cheerful and happy, filled the castle. Everybody rejoiced that she was to be thrust aside from her father's heart—from the inheritance of his power. All at once she heard a light laugh in the passage near her room—a laugh and a sweet young voice calling out.



“Papa, papa, is this the way?”

As those pleasant words fell on her heart, Katharine stood up resolutely, her eyes gleaming, her lips shut hard. In her bosom she carried the hollow reed which Alamo had given her. One hand was pressed upon it as she stood. She left her room and glided cautiously through the long halls, until she reached the suite of apartments which, during the Governor's absence, had, by his orders been prepared for his bride.

They were fitted up with a degree of luxury that Katharine had never seen equaled. She had known nothing of those preparations; her chamber was in an isolated portion of the castle, and she held no communication with the staff of domestics. During her father's absence she had confined herself entirely to her own apartment when in the castle, the greater portion of each day being spent at her grandmother's lodge, or in wandering about the forest occupied with her strange, ungirlish thoughts, and vague dreams of the importance and power which were one day to be hers.

The rooms were all lighted, but there was no one in any of them, and she walked slowly along through their stately splendor, the wild light in her eyes growing each instant deeper, as evil thoughts surged more hotly into her mind.

“All this should have been hers,” she muttered once, in French. “My mother was murdered that *she* might hold her reign here.”

With her Indian instincts she believed it her duty to avenge her dead mother; she fancied that she heard her voice urging her on; and her heart no more faltered than would the courage of a priestess of some ancient religion when about to offer up a living sacrifice to appease the wrath of an offended Deity. Still, some holy feeling held her back.

The Governor had given little thought to her religious education, and in secret Katharine clung firmly to the Indian faith, and rejected with scorn the religion of the whites.

The girl had reached the bedchamber; she crept in and looked eagerly about. It was empty, as all the other rooms had been. She looked around at the rich, heavy furniture; the massive bed, with its hangings; the toilet-table, upon



which the maid had already spread many of the luxurious articles which her mistress had brought from France.

She went up to the table; her crafty instincts were soon able to decide which of the numerous bottles were most in use. She took the stopper out of one, poured into it the contents of the reed which she took from her bosom, and replaced every thing as it had been at her entrance.

She was softly approaching the door, when it opened, and Frontenac came in. He saw Katharine standing, mute and pale in the dim light, and reached out his arms in a burst of cordial affection.

"My Kate, my child, is it you?" he cried, straining her to his bosom and kissing her forehead with regretful tenderness. "Where have you been? I expected to find little Katharine the first one to greet me. Come to the light. I want to see your fair face."

He drew her toward the great wooden fire that burned within its fender of lustrous brass, and gazed down into her young face.

"It is like hers," he said, tenderly; "but how pale! how frightened! Why does my Kate tremble? Does she fear her own father?"

She turned her white face from his and looked wildly toward the toilet-table. He saw the look, and felt the fresh shudder that thrilled her from head to foot.

"You are ill, my poor child?"

She shook her head, but remained mute.

"Or they have treated you unkindly in my absence; a look of terror is new to this young face. Tell me if any one has wounded you, Kate. I would have my pretty one happy as a bird. Let me tell you, child, I have brought you a mate; you shall no longer be alone, or wish to run wild as of old. Besides, love,"—he paused here, looked grave a moment, and then smiled down upon her as before. "Besides, dear, I have brought a good, sweet mother for you from over the seas. Will you love her, Kate?"

The girl wrung herself from his arms and sunk down upon the floor, sobbing passionately. The Governor looked troubled, but she shrunk back from him with renewed shudders as he attempted to lift her up.



Just then the door opened, and a lady came in. She saw the Governor, and at once recognized the young creature at his feet as the child she was expected to love and cherish as her own.

"And this is our Katharine," she said, in her sweet, loving voice. "We have sent for you, dear child, more than once to-night. Look up and try to love me, if it is only because I shall endeavor to make your father happy."

Katharine slowly lifted her head, and gave one long, earnest gaze into that kindly face. Then her eyes slowly filled with tears, her lips began to quiver, and with a burst of sobs she sprung up, snatched a toilet-bottle from the table, dashed it to atoms on the hearth, and fled from the room.

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## CHAPTER XV.

### KATHARINE AND THE NEW MOTHER.

THE festivities which followed the Governor's arrival with his bride had now commenced in earnest, and the countess found more of her time taken up with the maintenance of her husband's state than was pleasant; for her domestic tastes were sadly deranged by the state ceremonies over which she was called to preside. She had seen too much of the most elegant court in the world not to do the honors of her position with fitting grace and splendor; but the adulation lavished upon her there only made the few hours of retirement which she could command the more precious.

A week after her arrival at Quebec there was to be a grand reception at the castle. The very announcement set half of the town in commotion. Never was there such discussions on dress, such anxiety to honor an occasion with every thing elegant and splendid as prevailed during that week with every one who had the slightest pretension to a place at the provincial court.

In the castle itself there was no ordinary excitement. The Governor was naturally anxious that his wife should inspire



admiration, and receive every honor in his power to grant—and down through every grade of rank from drawing-room to kitchen all was bustle and excitement.

The night came. The Countess Frontenac was in her drawing-room, examining with some interest the dresses that Mademoiselle, her French maid, was laying out for her choice. Half a dozen dresses lay upon the sofa and swept over the chairs, filling the exquisite little room with a glow of singular richness—a white brocade, flowered with silver, hung across Mademoiselle's arm, about which she was going off in ecstasies of admiration.

"Yes," said the countess, with a gentle smile, "that will do. He likes to see me in white. It was his taste years ago."

"Ah, it is beautiful, *très distingué* ; Madame shall be superb. Now that it is decided, will Madame sit down here and have her hair done? It will not take much time, but she shall be satisfied with the effect."

The lady seated herself with a languid sigh, while Mademoiselle braided, and puffed, and rolled her beautiful tresses into the fashion which prevailed in Paris, all the while talking and chattering as only a favored maid can.

"So, as I was telling Madame, the strange creature came to me, with her great eyes full of fire, and pleaded to come in to speak with the count, but I sent her away."

"That was wrong," said the lady, and a slight frown disturbed her face. "It is her right—it is the count's wish that this young person should be treated with every consideration. Now I think of it, she has not been in this part of the castle to-day. Go, bring her here ; she must not feel neglected."

With a lofty toss of the head, Mademoiselle left the room, greatly shocked at the duty assigned her. To her astonishment, she found Adèle and Katharine together in the lodge-rooms, sitting upon the fur couch, and busy with a quantity of wild forest-flowers, that Katharine had brought in from the woods. They were crowding some cherry blossoms into a little oaken cup with carved handles, and engraved like a picture, when Mademoiselle came in, full of pompous importance.

"Mademoiselle," she said, addressing Adèle, and passing her eyes over Katharine, with a look of scorn, "Madame is at her toilet, and does you the favor of permitting your presence."



The young girl sprung up with the oaken drinking-cup in her hand. The spray of starry blossoms fell to her feet and unconsciously she trod upon it.

Katharine saw this and her eyes flashed. The little savage had a strange idea that blossoms of the forest were sensitive, and when bruised suffered pain. She pushed Adèle away and took up the branch tenderly, pitying it in her soul. This act was in no degree inconsistent with her character, even as it developed itself in after years. Some of the most cruel men that ever lived have been remarkable for some humane fancy which, if it stood alone, would mark them as angels of charity.

Adèle saw what she had done, and looked concerned.

"Ah, poor flower," she exclaimed, "how it is broken."

"Yes," answered Katharine, "it is dead. The whites kill every thing which grows in the forest."

"Come, Mademoiselle, are you ready?" cried the maid.

"Yes, yes."

"If you wish, that young person can come with you; she has my permission," observed Mademoiselle, with immense condescension.

"Oh, yes, come, Katharine, do; mamma's dress will be beautiful."

Katharine arose without a word. She had noticed the maid's airs with a look of quiet scorn as altogether unworthy of her resentment.

That moment Almo came in very quietly, as she always moved, carrying a small wooden pail full of maple sap.

"Oh, here comes the dear old grandmamma with the delicious drink which she draws from the maple trees. Wait a moment while we taste it."

Almo set down her little pail, and muttering some words of welcome, filled the oaken cup. Adèle tasted the sweet and exquisitely pure liquid with a little murmur of delight.

"Oh, let me carry some in to mamma," she pleaded, "it is so nice."

"Have I not said that Madame was at her toilet and desired your presence, Mademoiselle?" cried the maid.

"Wait—by-and-by," said the Indian woman, in a low, harsh voice that made Katharine turn and look at her.

"Grandame, she said, I will not go; you want me"



Ahmo sat down on the furs, leaning her head wearily on one hand.

"Go, go," she said, "Ahmo is weary; she can wait."

The two girls went out, following the maid, who marshaled them through the corridors with the tread of a potentate. The countess had been completing her own toilet. Adèle uttered an exclamation of delight as the splendid woman before the glass turned upon her. Her mother had been searching among the jewels that fairly littered the table for a string of diamonds wherewith to loop up the waves of hair that rolled back from her face, and held the gems flashing in her hand as the girls came in.

Katharine paused on the threshold, breathless with astonishment. Never in her life had she seen any thing so splendid as that frost-like robe, with its silver flowers rustling together as it flowed back from the underskirt of rose-colored satin, so delicately quilted that it seemed paved with tiny sea-shells. The body of this dress was cut square at the bosom, exposing a neck so smooth and fair that the heavy necklace of diamonds that surrounded it seemed casting their light upon snow. Fine yellow lace fell from the bosom, and clustered around the sleeves that terminated at the elbows, leaving the shapely arms bare to the wrists.

"Will this do, Adèle?" said the countess, fastening the jeweled chain in her hair, and dropping a long, heavy curl on each shoulder. "Is mamma pretty enough not to disappoint all the guests that are coming to-night?"

"Oh, mamma, you are so lovely—so beautiful," cried Adèle in a glow of delighted admiration. "How my new papa will love you."

The countess blushed and kissed her daughter, half ashamed of being so lovely at her time of life.

"And you, Katharine," she said, with a shade of restraint in her voice, "how bright your eyes are—brighter than all these pretty stones; are *you* pleased?"

Katharine's eyes did indeed flash. The sight of those flaming diamonds had reminded her that her father had promised to bring a string of bright stones for her neck—had promised and forgotten to bring them.

"You are not pleased; you do not like something that I



wear; what is it, child?" she said, a little troubled by those large eyes so full of angry splendor.

Katharine changed on the instant, and vailing her eyes with those black lashes, drew close to the toilet.

"The golden-haired lady is beautiful; she, blinds Mahaska like the sun."

"What flattery here," laughed the lady, and stooping down she kissed the girl on her forehead. "Oh, never fear; we shall soon teach you to love us."

"It would be impossible not to love Madame; the very savages do that," chimed in the maid, restless at being left in the background so long.

Before the countess could answer, she heard her husband's step approaching the room. She cast a look in the mirror, recognized the beauty it gave back with a bright smile, and began to draw on her gloves.

A flush of pride swept over Frontenac's face as he came in and saw her standing there, so queenly in her beauty.

"My love, my wife," he said, kissing her hand as if she had been an empress, and he her slave, "where in all Canada can the most critical man living find your equal?"

"Flatterer," cried the lady, stopping his mouth with the hand yet rosy with his kisses. He seized the hand, pressed it again to his lips, drew it beneath his arm, and led her out.

Katharine had stood watching this scene with a swelling pain at the heart. She was pale as death, and her eyes, usually so bright, were heavy with anguish.

"He did not speak to me," she cried, in the sharp pain of her disappointment. "He has not spoken to me all day; he did not feel that I was here."

Adèle was greatly troubled by this outcry.

"Wait," she said, in a voice sweet with feminine sympathy. "They will not be long; it is only a reception; we will sit up and wait for him. Poor papa, he is so busy and has so much to think of—that is why he did not notice us; but we will wait and surprise him."

"No," said Katharine, "I will return to grandame; she never overlooks Mahaska."



## CHAPTER XVI.

"OH, MOST WOEFUL NIGHT."

KATHARINE went out abruptly, and joined Ahmo in the lodge chamber.

"Has Mahaska come for the sweet drink? Is the pale woman thirsty?" she asked, starting up.

"He is gone—he did not speak to me—he did not look at me," cried the poor, wild thing, burying her face in both hands.

Ahmo took the girl in her arms and soothed her with caressing gentleness. Little was said between them, but Ahmo's eyes now and then kindled in the darkness like those of a cat, and the sorrow in Katharine's heart hardened into sullen anger.

"Get up!" cried the girl, impetuously. "Get up, I say!"

"What does Mahaska wish?" asked the woman.

"Take Mahaska away!" she cried, in her Indian dialect. "She is beating her heart out here like an eagle in a cage. The pale-face is grinding it under her heel! Take Mahaska away—quick—she will breathe this air no longer. She wants to go to the woods."

"But Mahaska would not leave her father—she has always refused to go. She will be sorry and cry to come back."

The girl stamped on the floor with mad passion. Her eyes flashed, her delicate nostrils quivered; you could see the edges of her white teeth beneath the parted lips.

"Mahaska has no father!" she fairly shrieked; "she has no name—no home! Take her into the woods—carry her among her mother's people! There she will escape the sight of all that tortures her."

"Let Mahaska reflect—"

She struggled fearfully with herself, interrupting the woman with a desperate gesture.

"Will Ahmo drive her grandchild mad? Does she, too, love to torture her? Mahaska will die—she will cover Ahmo with her heart's blood."



She drew from her belt the little dagger she always wore there—a gift from her father—and pointed it at her own bosom. The woman darted forward with a cry, and wrested the poniard from her grasp.

“Let Mahaska live,” she whispered.

“Why should she live?” cried the girl. “What is left her now?”

“Live for power—for revenge,” hissed Ahmo. “Live to be a great queen among her mother’s people. That alone is life.”

A sudden reflection dawned over the despair in Katharine’s face. She clutched her grandmother’s hand, repeating, slowly:

“Live for that—for that! Yes, Katharine is all Indian now.”

The woman saw the thought which had been born in her mind, and knew that the danger was past.

“Will Mahaska go or stay?” she questioned.

“Take her away,” she answered; but the passion of her voice had deepened into the low, concentrated tone of resolve. “Take Mahaska away; let her breathe the free air of the wilderness; let her lose herself in its darkness. The homes of the pale-faces are hateful to her. The green of the woods and the blue of the sky are enough for her now. Her name is Mahaska.”

Ahmo turned away in silence, and began making some hurried preparations for departure.

“Quick,” said Katharine, “the Governor may send for me; he will not let me go. He keeps me like a young eagle, chained by the leg, but I will break away—away.”

“Ahmo is ready,” returned the woman. “Let her grandchild come.”

She passed out of the room, and Katharine followed. Noiselessly they glided through the long halls and deserted anterooms. Once out of the lodge-room, Katharine drew a deep breath of relief, and urged her grandmother on still more rapidly.

The Indian woman led the way, filled with joy at bearing the last of her race away from the haunts of the people whom she regarded with such relentless hate.



They came, at last, to a hall, near the great saloon

"Wait here," said Ahmo, "while I bring the canoe to the upper landing.

"Be quick, then," cried the impatient girl. "I can not breathe here."

Ahmo hurried away. Mahaska turned and found herself with the Governor. In his preoccupation he had forgotten that he had not seen her before.

"Katharine, is it you?" he said.

She raised her head with an effort to call up the old pride. He saw the trace of tears upon her cheeks.

"You have wept," he said; "poor child."

He laid his hand caressingly on her shoulder. Once the touch would have thrilled her heart to its center; now the action only called up a host of bitter feelings, as she contrasted the careless sign of notice with the affection she had seen lavished on the young French girl.

"The Governor-chief does not need Katharine," she said, in a broken voice; "he has no place in his heart for her."

"You must not be impatient and jealous," he said, annoyed to see the proofs of her Indian nature so apparent even at a time like that. "You should be dutiful and loving now, Katharine."

"Shall Katharine give her love to be trampled under the feet of strangers?" she demanded, passionately.

"Adèle is my daughter now," he replied; "she will love you very much if you will permit her; this feeling is wrong."

"Katharine was the Governor's daughter, but the chief has forgotten that. Katharine will go far away," she said; "she is like a young bird thrown in a nest where she has no place. She will go into the wilderness and seek out her mother's people; for Chileli's sake they will welcome her."

The mention of that name jarred rudely upon his aching heart. He turned away in silence. Katharine stood silently watching. Then pity for the girl overpowered his irritation. He paused and said:

"You must not talk of going away, poor child; your place is here, with me. You must make yourself content and nappy"



"I am not happy ; I will not try to be happy here," she answered. "I never shall be content. Let me go into the woods. That is the place for Chilili's child."

"You pain me more than you can dream of," he said. "Think how much I have to annoy me. Do not add to it by the recital of your imaginary troubles."

"It is better Katharine should go," she exclaimed, vehemently ; "she vexes the Governor by her presence ; she will do that no more."

"Foolish child ! why will you hurt yourself and me by such thoughts," he said, with sad patience. "At least, leave this subject for a time ; when I am more able to give it attention we will talk of it again. Now, go to your room and be good."

He extended his hand ; for an instant she looked doubtful whether to touch it ; then the remnants of her wild affection conquered the stubborn resolution hardening over her heart. She sprung forward, caught his hand to her lips, and kissed it passionately.

For a few moments Katharine stood motionless where he had left her ; then she flung her arms aloft with a mute expression of regret painful to witness in one so young, and flew back toward her room.

When Ahmo came back, full of eager expectation, searching for Mahaska, the strange girl refused to leave her father's castle.

Ahmo sat down by her in dead silence, till the roll of carriages and the tread of feet died away, scarcely heeding them. Isolated in that remote chamber they were not likely to be disturbed. All at once a light step came tripping along the passage, and Adèle entered the room.

"Oh, you are here yet, old woman," she said ; "I'm so glad ! Mamma is worn out, and very thirsty. Be quick and give me some of the maple sap—she never tasted any in her life ; so now is the time."

Ahmo sprung to her feet, struggled fiercely with herself not to betray the wicked joy at her heart, and with a slow, quiet movement, filled the oaken cup.

"Tell me," said Adèle, as the old woman stirred the delicious liquid with a reed, dwelling leisurely on the operation,



but turning her back on Katharine, who did not notice the action, "tell me, where did you get that pretty cup, old woman?"

"It was hollowed out by a great medicine man of our tribe," answered Ahmo, softly, "from the oak that shadowed our council-fires. Drink from the Indian's drinking-cup is very sweet."

Ahmo held out the cup as she spoke.

Adèle took it.

"Thank you, old woman," she said, lighting the room with her smiles. "Good-night, Katharine; mamma is alone in her dressing-room. Papa has not been able to get away from the state chamber, so you can not see him till morning. I'm very sorry, but keep a good heart, and dream that we all love you dearly."

The gay young creature ran out of the room as she spoke, and went tripping along the passages and through that sumptuous suite of rooms, rejoicing over the cool and novel beverage she had procured for her mother's refreshment.

Madame Frontenac was sitting in a great easy-chair, weary with the honors lavished upon her by those who were in some sort her husband's subjects. She had found Adèle waiting for her in the dressing-room, and yielded to her gay wish when the fair young creature insisted on bringing some of the sweet drink that had proved so pleasant to herself.

"Here it is," cried Adèle, giving the oaken cup to her mother, and standing by as she drank, with a smile of triumphant kindness on her lip. "Isn't it delightful? Did you ever taste any thing so delicate?"

"I do not quite like the taste," said the lady, taking the cup from her lips to utter the word. Adèle's countenance fell.

"Oh, mamma! it's like the perfume of flowers. Only think, it is the sweet sap of a tree just before its blossoming. I'm sure you will like it."

"I am very thirsty, and any thing pure and cool suffices," answered the lady as she drank off what remained in the cup. "Now, good-night, my love. It is time you were in bed. Good-night."

"Good-night, mamma—sleep well."

The countess was left alone, now, drooping languidly in



her chair. She was tired, but very happy—happy in the honor that had been done to her husband that night—happy in a consciousness that he loved her better and better every day, and that he had been especially proud of her that evening. As she sat gazing dreamily into the red caves of the fire, a sort of dizziness came over her—she drew a hand across her forehead, and sighed heavily. The dizziness increased, yet it was all the while accompanied by a feeling of such delightful languor that she could make no effort to shake it off.

She roused herself after an instant—tried to walk to the next room, but staggered against the bed the moment it was reached, and was forced to lie down.

“It will pass away in a moment,” she murmured; “I wish Charles would come up.”

The whirl in her brain increased; her heart beat with difficulty—there was a weight upon it as if she were suffocating—the languor gave way to an insupportable pain under which she would have shrieked but had no power. She tried to call Adèle—her voice died in a hoarse whisper. She strove to put out her hand and reach the bell upon her table—her limbs were stiff and rigid as if she had been seized with catalepsy.

Then the thought that she was dying broke upon her with unutterable agony. Many and many times in her misery she had prayed for death, and now in the first bloom of her happiness, those prayers were answered!

If her husband would only come in! All her powers of reflection were bent upon that one thought—to see him once again—to feel his parting kiss upon her lips—to go into eternity with that beloved voice the last earthly sound that met her ear.

Again she strove to cry out. Must she die there alone—die and take no farewell of him? The thought gave her power over death itself; she made one supernatural effort, and a shriek rung out from her white lips so loud and terrible, that those who heard it were stricken with awful terror.

Mahaska heard it as she stood in the lodge-chamber, where Ahmo had just left her, after casting the poisoned reeds upon the floor. The young girl had gathered them up with a feeling of vague uneasiness, and with them still in her hand started out, for her heart leaped to the cry with maddening



pain. She sprung forward, rushed through corridor and anteroom into her step-mother's chamber. Every thing was silent there; by the glow of the shaded lamp she saw a dead face, gleaming white and still upon the pillow. The wild creature was appalled. By the reed in her hand—by the dead woman outstretched before her; she knew of a certainty what her grandame had done, and was struck mute with horror.

The state chamber was located so far away that the expiring cry of his wife did not reach the Governor, who was dismissing his guests. All unconscious of his sorrow, he came hurriedly through the now empty saloons into the room which might now be almost considered as his bridal chamber. The lamp was dim—so dim that he did not observe Mahaska, who stood shaded by the curtains, nor did he observe how white the face was underneath them.

“Do you sleep, Adèle?”

There was no answer. He approached the bed, murmuring:

“My poor love, she is so weary!”

He bent over the couch, but she did not stir.

“Adèle!” he called, louder than before. Not a word, not a movement.

A sudden fear seized him—he snatched her hand—it was already growing cold. He released it and it fell back like lead upon the counterpane. He lifted the rigid form in his arms, saw the pale face and the half-closed eyes, then, with the momentary insanity brought by the conviction forced upon his mind, he uttered a cry of agony that rung far through the galleries.

It roused all within hearing; it woke the young girl, Adèle, from her troubled sleep; and when the startled group rushed into the room, the husband and daughter were bending over the body, crying, in bitter anguish:

“Speak to us—speak to us! Only once—only once!”

No human aid could be of any avail. They brought a physician, but life had been for some time extinct. She must have died of some sudden spasm of the heart; her maid remembered that she had been subject to such, and had been in the habit of taking many dangerous medicines as remedies



In the height of his grief Frontenac saw Mahaska standing close by the bed. As her eyes caught his, she made an effort to hide something which was grasped close in her hand. The expression of her face aroused suspicion even in that moment of anguish.

"Why are you here? What is it you are trying to conceal?" he demanded, hoarsely.

Mahaska did not answer, but smitten with dread, strove to hide the reed under the folds of her dress. The French maid sprung upon her like a tigress, and wrenched the fatal evidence from her hand.

"See, see, it is a hollow tube, a reed from which the pith has been taken. It is stained purple—still moist; here is a drop distilling from the end. My lord count, have the creature seized; kill her; she knows how my lady died."

Frontenac laid his hand heavily on Mahaska's shoulder and forced her up to the light. The splendor of her great eyes was dimmed, their boldness had fled; she cowered like an animal under the stern glance of her father.

"Mahaska?"

She looked up shuddering, and made a wild effort to wrench herself from under his hand.

"Mahaska, answer me, what have you done?"

She struggled still more fiercely, and tried to dart from the room, but the maid pounced upon her with ferocious violence.

"No, no, little murderess—you shall never escape, nevere—nevere."

"Bring my physician here," ordered the count, addressing the crowd of servants that thronged the door.

"He is already here, your excellency," answered the physician, who had withdrawn from the bed.

"Ah yes, I remember; you pronounce her dead—quite, quite gone from me."

"Yes, your excellency, nothing but a miracle could call her spirit back from heaven."

"But you said it was from natural causes."

"I thought so then, your excellency."

"And now, now?" cried the unhappy man, trembling in all his limbs.

"The face of that young creature is troubled with guilt—



how came she here? Why is the reed which she strives to hide stained purple? My lord, my lord, these Indians know many subtle poisons, and she is part Indian."

"God have mercy upon us—she is, she is."

"Give me the reed," said the physician, taking it from the French woman, who strove to wipe away a drop of purple that had fallen on her hand, with horror in her face. "I will take this to my room and examine it, your excellency. If my suspicions prove true—"

"No, no, I can not believe it; I will not believe it," cried Frontenac, passionately. "God may have smitten me, but not through my own child."

The physician withdrew, looking very grave. Then Frontenac gave orders in a low, heart-broken voice that Mahaska should be taken to the lodge-chamber and kept there under guard.

The young girl allowed her father's menials to seize upon her, and made no resistance—she had not offered one word of defense or protest; indeed, her demeanor was that of a person suffering under a sense of guilt—but when they had dragged her to the door, she looked back with a wild, yearning glance that went to Frontenac's heart. He made a movement as if to rescue her, when, with a cry full of pathetic anguish, she broke away from her captors, and falling at his feet, cried out. "No, no, no!" Then checking herself, she arose and went forth of her own free will.

Shut in his room with no one near but the dead form of his idol and the child she had left behind, Frontenac gave free course to that agony which is so terrible to witness in a strong, proud man.

Even in the midst of her grief, true to her womanly nature, Adèle attempted consolation.

"Mamma has left me with you," she sobbed; "we will never part; you are my father."

He held her to his heart with words of passionate endearment, although her face so clearly recalled that of his lost one that the very love he gave her was like an added pain.

"Never," he exclaimed; "nothing shall part us—you are mine—her child and mine."

"Do not, do not think this terrible thing of Katharine



either. It was God who took my mamma. He had not angels enough, and so summoned her. Poor Katharine—father, let me go to her.”

“To-morrow you shall see her. Leave me alone—alone in this room—oh, Adèle, my wife, my wife.”

Frontenac flung himself in a paroxysm of terrible grief on his knees by the couch on which his dead love lay, cold and still as marble. It was not simple grief that possessed him but under all was the horrible dread that she had been murdered by his own child.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### REVELATION OF THE FLOT.

MAHASKA was locked in her lodge-chamber. All night long she had heard the tramp of a sentinel placed at the door. She was a prisoner in her father's castle—a prisoner under guard, while the white woman's child hung over her father and had a right to comfort him in his sorrow.

The girl looked up and saw the gray dawn breaking through the casement. A sudden fury seized her—one of those gusts of passion which were like absolute insanity.

She flew to a drawer and took from it a bundle of poisoned reeds, with some wild, half-formed purpose in her mind of ending her life then and there. Suddenly she paused—some recollection of her own mother swept across her heart and softened it like dew falling upon hot, parched earth.

She broke the reed in pieces and flung it out of the casement—sunk down upon the floor, and for the first time great, burning tears rose to her eyes, and streamed down her cheeks. Even as a little child, she had seldom wept; now the tempest which overflowed her soul was fearful to witness.

She sprang up again—she could breathe no longer—she must seek the free air. Perhaps her grandmother had gone down to the island; she would break loose and seek her; together they would bid farewell forever to the homes of the



white man and the civilization which had only galled instead of softening her savage nature.

Full of this mad thought, she sprung up, rushed to the door, and shook it vehemently. For a moment she had forgotten that the room was a prison. The hard resistance fell upon her with agonies of rage; she retreated from the door, her eyes full of burning light, her hands clenched and her teeth gleaming. With the bound of a tiger, she sprung upon the door again, and shook it till the iron fastenings grated and rattled like the bolts of a maniac's cell.

"Let me out! let me out! I will not stay here," she shrieked; "let me out, or I will beat myself to pieces against the wall."

All at once she was still, and held her breath with a hushed smile on her face. She had heard Ahmo's voice outside the door.

It was true. Ahmo had come back to the castle in search of her grandchild; stealing softly up from the secret passage, she had glided unseen through the corridors close to the door of the lodge-chamber. There she found a sentinel, who presented his bayonet as she approached. The woman recoiled a step, and her eyes flashed.

"Who is it," she cried, "who dares point his long knife at Ahmo? She was the mother of Chileli."

"I know all that well enough," answered the sentinel, "and the grandmother of the little tiger-cub we've got locked up in there. She's nothing but a cub of the old one."

"The white soldier talks with a long tongue. Ahmo is the widow of a great chief. Ahmo's child was the wife of your Governor. Put your long knife with its point to the floor. Ahmo will pass in to see her child." Still the soldier menaced her. "Tell me," she said, "why are soldiers placed with guns and long knives at the end before Mahaska's lodge?"

"Well, there's no harm in telling that. They've locked up your young tiger-cub in yonder, and I'm placed on guard to keep her safe. Didn't you hear her pounding against the door just now?"

"Locked up Mahaska?"

"Yes, I should think so."

"What for?"

"Oh, one of your Indian tricks. She's only committed



murder—downright murder—poisoned my lady, the countess, who lies dead in her chamber, broken the count's heart and gone raving mad with her own devil's work."

"Mahaska! White man, you speak lies."

"Ahmo! Ahmo! Grandame! ho, grandame!"

"There, do you hear that?" cried the soldier.

The woman stood before him, stern, proud and thoughtful; her broad forehead was knit darkly over those burning eyes, her mouth was firmly set, and in every lineament she bore a sublime consciousness of power. She turned her face without moving further, and spoke out in a loud, clear voice.

"Mahaska, daughter of Chileli, have no fear. Ahmo is strong, she will open the cage where they have shut in her wild bird."

"Will you though?" cried the soldier, presenting his gun. "Not while I am on guard."

"Tell Ahmo again; she does not understand why Chileli's child is in a cage," said the woman, with stern dignity.

"I tell you, old woman, she is accused of poisoning our countess, the Governor's new wife who lies dead over yonder."

"Dead—then it is true, the white lady is dead."

A gleam of cold triumph came into Ahmo's eyes as she spoke. The soldier saw it.

"And you're glad, I dare say; perhaps you helped her—who knows?" he said.

"Mahaska did not poison the white lady," said Ahmo.

"Of course you'd say that, mother red-breast."

"Let her free; Mahaska is no wolf to be shut up in a trap. Let her out."

"Well, I should rather think it will be some time first."

"Then Ahmo will do it."

"No you won't, old red-skin, depend on that."

"Ahmo! Ahmo!" cried a voice from within the room, "open the door—they stifle me in here."

The old woman's eyes blazed; she clenched her teeth, and with a slow, stealthy movement, drew a dagger from her bosom. Crouching low, she sprung upward, and its keen blade descended sharp and quick, leaving gleams of light behind it.

The soldier had just time to see this movement and make



a dextrous defense with his gun. His bayonet clashed across the poniard and it flew out of Ahmo's hand, ringing sharply on the stone floor behind her.

"So you want to murder me too, my precious old wild-cat. Come, come, we'll see to that. March off to the Governor. This comes of bringing pretty black-eyed squaws into the castle. It will be a mercy if we are not all murdered in our tracks—come, old catamount, turn about, march!"

The woman folded her arms, looked him steadily in the face, and replied with stern gravity:

"Ahmo is ready."

With a solemn, heavy tramp, the man started, driving Ahmo before him, and pointing the way with his bayonet. The old woman seemed to grow taller and more erect each moment. Every step was planted firmly on the floor as she made it. You might have fancied Queen Elizabeth moving after that fashion when she entered the Tower a state prisoner.

The sentinel followed his captive into the room where Frontenac was seated.

She caught the heavy latch of the door in her hand, steadied herself, and walked forward upright and sternly proud. She cast one glance upon the Governor, and remained obstinately silent, with her eyes fixed upon the ground.

A shudder ran through his frame when he beheld her. He motioned the sentinel to go out, and was left alone with the murderess of his wife.

"Ahmo," he said, with an effort, "why has this man brought you here?"

She looked him steadily in the face.

"Why is Mahaska shut up like a wolf's cub in a trap?"

Frontenac turned deadly pale, and he answered, in a voice hoarse with grief:

"She is suspected of a terrible crime. She must not go free."

"Mahaska has committed no crime. She is innocent as the bird in its nest."

"Ahmo, my—my wife is dead. Your grandchild was found alone in her room. One hour she was radiant, happy, standing by my side. The next, lifeless, and that girl nearer with poison in her hand—poison that she tried to conceal,



but in vain. An oaken drinking-cup, carved by the Indians of your tribe, was found upon the floor, empty. Katharine would tell us nothing about it.

"It was I that filled the cup," exclaimed Ahmo, still keeping her eyes on the ground. "It was I, Ahmo, who stirred the maple sap with a reed that dropped poison with every movement."

"You—you! Woman, are you a demon?"

"I am Chileli's mother. Her spirit called from the great hunting-ground for vengeance on her murderer. You loved the pale white face, and I killed her with poison, as you killed Chileli."

"As I killed Chileli! Woman, are you mad?"

"I am an Indian, and love vengeance."

"Ahmo," he said, with an effort, "you have repaid my kindness with true Indian treachery. I gave you a home and gentle treatment, and you have returned it by a crime that has made me miserable for life."

She did not answer, did not even look up. The savage face deepened into cold ferocity as he spoke.

"It was you who placed the poison in Mahaska's hand—you who killed my wife."

She looked full in his face with her murderous eyes gleaming rage, as they had done when she gazed down upon her helpless victim. She flung aside all fear, and gave free passage to the passion which had so long seethed in her soul.

"Ahmo did kill the pale-face," she exclaimed, "killed her with the poison which the Governor found."

"Wretch," he cried, "can you stand there and acknowledge to my very face without a shudder that you made my innocent child the instrument of your crime?"

"Revenge is sweet," hissed the old woman; "the death-cry of the pale-face was music to Ahmo's soul. But the poison was not given by Mahaska. Ahmo does not share the joy of her vengeance but eats it alone. The child might shudder. She is part white, and does not know how sweet such things are. Mahaska must wait till she gets into the woods before Ahmo teaches her how to laugh when she kills."

"Great heavens! is this creature human?" cried the Governor, struggling with the horror her words left behind them.



"She is an Indian. She loves her people, and hates the pale-faced whites. But that Chileli loved the Governor chief, Ahmo would have sent the oaken cup to him."

"Would to God you had, unholy woman."

"Ahmo thought of that many times," answered the woman, with the look of a demon. "But she remembered Chileli's words when she died, and knew that her spirit would weep forever and ever if Ahmo dropped poison on the lips she had kissed so often. But the woman—the pale white woman—who stole into Chileli's nest before it was cold, Chileli's heart will leap in the great hunting ground when she knows that Ahmo has hurled her out."

The Governor lifted his hands in horror of this cruel speech.

"The Governor chief does not believe Ahmo. He thinks Mahaska gave the drink. Let him call the child out of her prison. She knows nothing. The pale-faced child carried the drink to its mother."

"Is there nothing human left in you?" Frontenac faltered, fairly overcome by abhorrence and the agony which her confession had caused him. "What motive could you have had for revenge? What had my poor wife done that you could wish her death?"

"She had taken the place that was Chileli's—"

"But Chileli was dead," interrupted the Governor. "Did you think it would please her spirit when you committed this fearful crime?"

"Chileli was murdered to make room for her," returned the old woman. "Ahmo was not the first assassin."

"What do you mean? Are you raving?"

"The hands of the Governor are red with Chileli's blood," cried the Indian, pointing sternly at him. "He killed her because she stood in his way; but Ahmo was not blind; she waited till the pale-face came from over the great waters; then she mixed a strong poison, stronger than that the medicine man gave to the Governor for the poor Indian girl."

"Great heaven," he exclaimed, "what madness is this? I kill Chileli! Why, she had nothing but kindness and gentleness from me all the years she lived in my dwelling. This is only a falsehood conjured up to screen your own guilt."

"The Governor need tell no lies," she cried, furiously.



"He is a coward. Ahmo dares to own what she has done. You may torture her, you may put her to death, but you can not wring even a groan from the lips of the chief's daughter, and her last words shall be: 'Behold the murderer of Ahmo's child!'"

"Woman—woman, are you mad? Is this the talk of a maniac, or a horrible truth?"

"Truth! What does the white man know of truth? Were not tears in his eyes when Chileli died? Did he not cover his face, and refuse all comfort, while the black poison that killed her lay in the furs? Was Ahmo deceived? No, no. She hid the black drops in her bosom. She would be sure—very sure. So, with a hard heart, she took the little dog that had followed her from the wilderness, poured the drops down his throat, and he lay down at her feet dead. Then Ahmo watched—watched as a cat sees the bird fluttering among green leaves and waits. She was patient, for vengeance is full of dreams, and Ahmo does not eat her life at a mouthful."

The Governor groaned aloud.

"Ahmo saw the pale white woman come to Chileli's home, and then she knew why her daughter was put into the grave. Then her heart was sure, and she knew well that Chileli was calling for the white woman's life. Ahmo drew sap from the great maple trees before the buds were red. She watched every drop fall into its trough, and said: 'In that drop Ahmo knows how to put a death.' She made a pail of cedar-wood, with her own hands, and filled it with sap, pure as water, sweet as a child's kisses. Then she gathered herbs, pressed the purple juice from their stem, and gathering reeds from the shore, took out the pith, and filled the hollow with purple death. There was rejoicing at the great wigwam of the Governor chief. All the windows were full of light. That guided Ahmo's steps as she came up from the water. The wigwam shook with music that laughed as she passed. She saw the pale white woman from over the great waters, with a robe like the mountain snows, and her head crowned with beautiful stones, that made rainbows as she walked. Then Ahmo's heart leaped in her bosom like a young panther's when its mother brings food. But she bore her cedar pail steadily, that no drop of the sweet drink should be lost. She



felt in her bosom, and knew that the reeds were safe, and that their pith had turned into purple drops. Ahmo went to the lodge-chamber. There she found Mahaska pining like a bird shot in the bosom. She was left alone to drink her tears. Ahmo saw it, and fire rose in her heart. She sat down by Mahaska, and the fire burned red as she listened to the child's tears. The great wigwam rung with music. Lights flashed through it like stars. Voices came up to the lodge-chamber full of joy, like the sound of forest-birds when all the trees are in flower. The fire burned hot in Ahmo's heart as she listened. Then the white child, the fox-cub from over the sea, that you call Adèle, came dancing into the room. She had tasted sweet drink from the cedar pail, and wanted some for her mother, who was weary. Then Ahmo's heart blazed like a prairie-fire. She filled the prophet's drinking-cup, and stirred it with the reeds hidden in her bosom. Mahaska did not see it, the white fox-cub did not see it. Ahmo eat her vengeance alone. She saw the reed weep purple tears into the pure sap. The white girl seized the cup between her two hands, and went off laughing. Ahmo sat down. Her heart was light; she smiled in the dark. Mahaska still wept bitter tears. The music and laughter made her heart ache. Then the tramp of feet came from the court, as if warriors were taking the war-path, and the great wigwam grew still. Ahmo's heart fell. She was afraid the pale white lady would not taste her drink. She crept into the long passage and listened. A great cry made her leap from the floor. She knew that Chileli was avenged, and went away happy."

Frontenac sat utterly confounded. He saw that the woman believed herself a holy avenger—that she considered him the murderer of her daughter, and out of her savage sense of justice had assassinated his wife.

"Woman—wicked, wicked woman, what have you done?" he cried. "I gave Chileli the medicine which the physician ordered; never any thing else, I swear to you. And for this you have killed the sweetest, truest woman that ever lived."

"Yes, yes," she answered, nodding her head slowly, "and the Governor begged his great medicine man for poison. He need not lie. Ahmo has it now. She took it from the lodge-chamber. It was the draught which killed Chileli."



"I tell you it is false," he exclaimed; "only a fancy of your ignorant mind. She was not poisoned."

"Ahmo is only a poor Indian," she said. "The Governor can kill her, but every night her ghost shall stand by his bed and cry: 'Chileli's murderer!'"

"You shall not think these infernal things," he exclaimed. "Show me the poison, as you call it. I will convince you that it did her no harm."

"You wish to destroy the bottle, that Ahmo's story may not be believed," she said. "No, no; the Indian will keep her proofs."

Frontenac was too heart-broken even to feel irritation at her cunning obstinacy. The charge she had made against him filled his heart with a sort of pity for her crime, for he knew that her love for Chileli had been the one human softness in her breast, and revenge for her supposed murder would be to her savage ideas not a crime, but a religious duty.

"Will you show it to the physician?" he asked. "I promise not to take the bottle from you. Only let him see it, that you may be convinced you had no reason for your terrible crime."

"He may see it," she answered, defiantly. "The Governor will make signs to him, and he will tell Ahmo lies; but she knows that the liquid killed her child."

"Where is it? Can you send for it?"

"Ahmo has it here," she answered, laying her hand on her bosom. "She has kept it close to her heart day and night, that it might burn there, and never let her forget the work she had to do."

The Governor turned away with a shudder. He went to the door, and ordered the sentinel in waiting to send the physician to him without delay. He did not address Ahmo during the interval which ensued, and she stood there, cold and pitiless, neither believing his declarations, nor softened by the sight of his anguish.

In a few moments the physician entered the room, looking at Ahmo with stern abhorrence, which produced no impression upon her iron impassibility.

"The bottle, Ahmo, give me the bottle," said the Governor, impatiently.



She drew from her bosom a small vial, half full of a dark colored liquid, and put it in his hand.

"Tell me what that is, doctor," he continued, "and if you ever saw it before."

The physician drew out the cork and smelled of it.

"It is a strong preparation of opium," he said. "I gave it among the medicines for the old Indian's daughter, to check her cough and prevent her sleeplessness."

"You hear, Ahmo," cried the Governor. "Doctor, the woman believes that I poisoned her child. It was out of this horrible idea that she—she killed my poor wife."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the physician, in horror. "Why, woman, this is only a poison when taken in very large quantities. The few drops given each time to your daughter helped to prolong her life. See."

He raised the vial to his lips, and swallowed a portion of the contents.

"I think that ought to satisfy you, wretched woman. I am not likely to swallow poison so fearlessly."

The woman had never once turned her eyes from his face. When she saw him drink the liquid, the truth of his statement forced itself upon her.

"Now, Ahmo, are you satisfied?" cried the Governor. "If you had only questioned some one, instead of listening to your own ignorant fancies, you need not have been a murderer now."

A spasm struggled over the hardness of her face. She cried out, hoarsely :

"But the dog—the forest-dog that died at Ahmo's feet."

The physician held up the vial.

"Chileli was only suffered to take this drop by drop, but you emptied half the vial full into the animal's mouth. In that quantity it would kill any thing."

Ahmo's great fierce eyes filled with a horrible doubt. She began to tremble visibly. Her voice shook as she spoke :

"Let Ahmo die ; she deserves death."

"You have gained nothing by this crime," pursued the Governor ; "the spirit of your child looks down upon you with anger—the great Manitou will punish you more cruelly than man could do."



Ahmo flung up her arms in sudden anguish—the thought that she had offended her lost daughter was a more terrible torture than any physical suffering to which she could have been subjected.

“Kill me!” she cried; “kill me! I do not wish to live. Chileli, Chileli, hide your face when Ahmo dies.”

Her anguish was terrible to behold; she crouched down on the floor, shrouding her face after the fashion of her people in deep grief.

“Send for Katharine,” said Frontenac; “we have wronged her; she must be set free.”

The physician stepped out and gave Frontenac's orders to the sentinel. After a few moments of dead silence, the door opened and Katharine burst into the room. She cast one wild glance about, then sprung to her grandmother's side and wound her arms about her neck, exclaiming:

“You shall kill Katharine too; she will not live when Ahmo is gone.”

“My poor child!” exclaimed the Governor, “you did not know of this crime—there is no guilt on your soul.”

“No,” returned Ahmo, “she is innocent—do not harm Chileli's child!”

“I will not stay here,” cried the girl, in wild passion. “You shall not harm Ahmo—she has done no more than you did—I know what your Bible says, ‘an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth!’”

The old woman shrunk under her words, and made a gesture to enforce silence.

“Ahmo was wrong,” she said, brokenly; “the Governor had not killed Mahaska's mother. Ahmo is a murderer—let her die.”

“My child,” cried Frontenac, “could you believe this horrible thing—you who all your life have had only love and tenderness from me?”

She looked from one to the other in mingled suffering and amazement.

“I saw the poison,” she said; “Ahmo has it still—Mahaska had a weak heart; she could not do it, but her grandame was right.”

“Here it is in my hands,” said the physician; “it is opium



—only a poison when given in large quantities—in your mother's case it was the most efficacious remedy that could be used."

Katharine looked back at her grandmother cowering there in her remorse and guilt. All that was magnanimous and generous in her soul surged into it then. She ran toward Ahmo again, flung her arms about her, as if to protect her by their clasp, and cried out:

"She shall not die alone! You shall kill me too—I will not live when Ahmo is gone. Burn us both at the same stake."

"Child," said the Governor, struggling with his anguish, "do you think that more bloodshed could soothe the grief she has brought on us? I have no wish to harm your grandmother—let her own conscience be her punishment—she could have none so terrible."

Ahmo cowered lower and lower, a groan burst from her lips. She pushed Katharine gently away.

"Go to him," she murmured, "Ahmo's heart is broken—she has no words; she acted like a prophet, but in the dark."

"Father! my father!" cried Katharine, with a burst of the old affection she had once lavished upon him, "spare her."

She fell at his feet, encircling his knees with her hands, while her burning tears rained down upon them.

"Forgive her," she pleaded, "only forgive her! She was mad—she did not know what she was doing—oh, she would give her own life to bring back that of the pale-face. She will go back to her people and die there."

"I do forgive her," returned the Governor, scarcely able to restrain his agitation; "no harm shall come to her. We must not deal with these savage natures by laws they can not comprehend; besides, she has been wronged."

"But you will not hate her—you will not hate Katharine who loves you? Kill me at once, rather than that—I shall die without your love—I shall go mad! Oh, love me, father."

Frontenac raised her in his trembling arms, and folded her to his heart, which ached under her weight with a terrible pain.

"God bless you," he murmured, "God bless you! I do, I



will love you—I have little left now—I am a desolate, heart-broken man. But I will atone to Chileli in goodness to Chileli's child!"

The old doctor bowed his head and turned away; it seemed wicked to intrude upon grief and a reconciliation like that.

At length Ahmo raised herself from the floor upon which she had been crouched. Her eyes, misty with the great love and yearning of her heart, rested on Mahaska's face.

"May the Great Spirit bless her," she said, to the Governor "Ahmo will trouble you no more; her home is henceforth in the wilderness."

"Poor woman," he said, brokenly; "I blame myself almost as much as you for this great sin."

"I am going away," she continued, in the same painful, monotonous tone; "afar in the woods, Ahmo will find a shelter to hide her crime; but she has some words in her heart that ache there; let her speak them to Chileli's child."

"She must not go," sobbed Katharine; "she will not go!"

"Let Mahaska be silent," returned the woman, almost sternly. "Ahmo is ready; her crime must go before the great prophet; he will judge her in his council-lodge."

The implicit obedience taught by her Indian tutelage silenced even Katharine's impetuous spirit. She struggled from her father's arms, and threw herself upon her grandmother's bosom. For some moments she wept there silently. The woman bowed her head over her, murmuring passionate words in her native tongue, counseling and directing her, maintaining through it all a stern composure more painful to witness than any outburst of grief would have been.

"Farewell!" she cried, at last. "Ahmo will disturb this dwelling no longer—farewell."

"Ahmo! Ahmo!" shrieked Katharine, clinging more closely to her. "Not yet, do not go yet!"

Slowly the woman unwound her arms, but though her face was dark with anguish, her courage did not falter, nor her hands tremble.

She pushed the girl gently into the Governor's outstretched arms, with one mute look of entreaty.

"Ahmo!" Katharine cried again, but all strength forsook



her with the agony of that last appeal, and she sunk insensible upon her father's shoulder.

The Indian woman moved slowly toward the door, paused an instant, looked back at the fainting girl with one long glance of yearning tenderness, and vanished slowly from their presence.

Out into the wilderness went this lonely woman, humbled in her great pride, for she had believed her crime a solemn act of justice—desolated by the loss of her grandchild, who was now thrown irrevocably into the power of the whites, and feeling that all the wild hopes of aggrandizement she had built up for that child had been utterly destroyed by the act which sent her a wanderer in the forest.

Alas for the proud Governor of Canada! a life of agony was concentrated in the few moments during which he stood with the senseless Indian girl lying heavily on his bosom. He waited drearily till she came to life, then, with a pale face and eyes surcharged with sorrow that never left them again, he gazed down upon her, the embodiment of the one wrong act in an otherwise most honorable and worthy career.

"Katharine," he said, "let this scene pass from your mind. Forget that this woman was ever of kin to you—forget everything except that you are my own dear child."

The wild thing clung to him in a burst of passionate affection, but she did not speak; the terrible excitement through which she had passed had tamed her down into gentle helplessness. Besides, once satisfied of her father's love, there was no thought of rebellion in her heart.

Frontenac turned to the physician.

"My friend," he said, "let the events of this night rest a secret between us. Silence the suspicion created in my household. Above all, see that no painful doubt is left in the mind of my niece and step-daughter. Can I depend on you?"

"As on yourself!" was the prompt reply.

The Governor wrung his physician's hand in silence. Then stooping in a heart-broken attitude over his daughter, he said in a low, weary tone:

"Now, Katharine, go to your room and pray for me, for yourself, and the pure spirit that is taken away."

Katharine looked at him, awe-stricken; her proud young



head drooped low beneath the majesty of his sorrow, and without a word, she followed the physician from the room. When quite alone, Frontenac went slowly away, along the dim corridors, through the darkened banqueting saloons into the sublime stillness of the death-chamber, where his love lay guarded by the angels.

THE END.



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An old-fashioned duet.  
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Afternoon calls. For two little girls.  
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Mistaken identity. Two males and three females.  
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A little Vesuvius. For six little girls.  
"Sold." For three boys.

An air castle. For five males and three females.  
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